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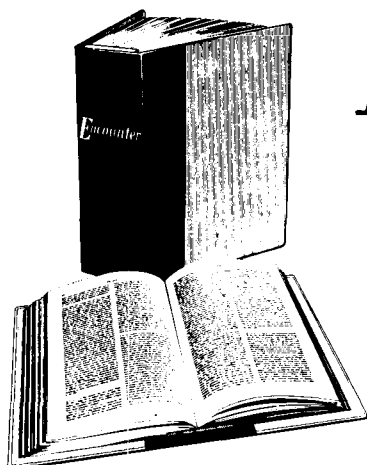
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Encounter

SEPTEMBER 1981
VOL. LVII No. 3
ISSN 0013-7073

Edited by MELVIN J. LASKY and ANTHONY THWAITE

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Per copy: UK £1.30; USA & Canada \$3.25. Back numbers £2.00 (\$5.00). Postage/packing: 40p (\$1.00).
Annual subscriptions: UK £15.75; USA & Canada \$36.50 surface, \$46.00 by air; Elsewhere £17.00.
Address for all departments: Encounter Ltd., 59 St Martin's Lane, London WC2N 4JS (01-836 4194).
US Mailing Agent: Expeditors of the Printed Word Ltd., 527 Madison Avenue, Suite 1217, New York 10022.
Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. c. 1981 by Encounter Ltd. Binder for six copies £4.00 (\$9.60).
Manuscripts are returned only if accompanied by s.a.e. (English stamp or International Reply Coupons).

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William Trevor

The Blue Dress

MY CINDER-GREY ROOM has a window, but I have never in all my time here looked out of it. It's easier to remember, to conjure up this scene or that, to eavesdrop. Americans give arms away, Russians promise tanks. In Brussels an English politician breakfasts with his mistress; a pornographer pretends he's selling Christmas cards. Carefully I listen, as in childhood I listened to the hushed conversation of my parents.

I stand in the cathedral at Vézelay, whose bishop once claimed it possessed the mortal remains of Mary Magdalene, a falseness which was exposed by Pope Boniface VIII. I wonder about that pope, and then the scene is different.

I sit in the Piazza San Marco on the day when I discovered a sea of corruption among the local Communists. The music plays, visitors remark upon the pigeons.

Scenes coalesce: Miss MacNamara passes along the promenade, Major Trubstall lies, the blue dress flutters and is still, in Rotterdam I have a nameless woman. "*Feest wezen vieren?*" she says. "*Gedronken?*" In Corniglia the wine is purple. The path by the coast is marked as a lover's lane, Beatrice and Dante, Abelard and Heloise. I am silly, Dorothea says, the dress is just a dress. She laughs, like water running over pebbles.

I must try, they tell me; it will help to write it down. I do not argue, I do precisely as they say. Carefully, I remember. Carefully, I write it down.

IT WAS BATH, not Corniglia, not Rotterdam or Venice, not Vézelay: it was in Bath where Dorothea and I first met, by chance in the Pump Room. "I'm sorry", I said, actually bumping into her.

She shook her head, saying that of course I hadn't hurt her. She blamed the crowds, tourists pushing like mad things, always in a hurry. But nothing could keep her out of the Pump Room because of its Jane Austen associations.

"I've never been here before."

"Goodness! You poor thing!"

"I was on my way to have some coffee. Would you like some?"

"I always have coffee when I come."

She was small and very young—twenty-one or two, I guessed—in a plain white dress without sleeves. She carried a basket, and had very fair hair, quite straight and cut quite short. Her oval face was perfect, her eyes intense, the blue of a washed-out sky. She smiled when she told me about herself, as though she found the subject a little absurd. She was studying the history of art but when she finished that she didn't know what on earth she was going to do next. I said I was in Bath because my ex-wife's mother, who'd only come to live there six months ago, had died. The funeral had taken place that morning and my ex-wife, Charlotte, had been furious that I'd attended it. But I'd always been fond of her mother, fonder in fact than Charlotte had ever been. I'd known of course that I would have to meet her at the funeral. She'd married again, a man who ran a wine business: he had been there too.

"Is it horrible, a divorce?" the girl asked me while we drank our weak, cool coffee. "I can never think of my parents divorcing."

"It's nice you can't. Yes, it's horrible."

"Did you have children?"

"No."

"There's that at least. But isn't it odd, to make such a very rudimentary mistake?"

"Extraordinary."

I don't know what it was about her manner

that first morning, but something seemed to tell me that this beautiful young creature would not be outraged if I said—which I did—that we might go somewhere else in search of a better cup of coffee. And when I said, “Let’s have a drink”, I said it confidently. She telephoned her parents’ house. We had lunch together in the Francis Hotel.

“I went to a boarding-school I didn’t like”, she said. “Called after St Catherine but without her charity. I was bad at maths and French and geography. I didn’t like a girl called Angela Tate and I didn’t like the breakfasts. I missed my brothers. What about you? What was your wife like?”

“Fond of clothes. Very fine tweed, a certain shade of scarlet, scarves of every possible variation. She hated being abroad, trailing after me.” I didn’t add that Charlotte had been unfaithful with anyone she had a fancy for; I didn’t ever want to think about that.

The waiter brought Dorothea veal escalope and steak *au poivre* for me. It was very like being in a dream. The funeral of my ex-mother-in-law had taken place at ten o’clock, there had been Charlotte’s furious glances and her husband’s disdain, my walking away when the ceremony was over without a word to anyone. I’d felt wound up, like a watch spring, seeing vividly in my mind’s eye an old, grey woman who’d always entertained me with her gossip, who’d written to me when Charlotte went to say how sorry she was, adding in a postscript that Charlotte had always been a handful. She and I had shared the truth about her daughter, and it was that that I’d honoured by making the journey to her funeral.

“They say I am compulsively naughty”, Dorothea said, as if guessing that I wondered what she had said to her parents on the telephone. I suspected she had not confessed the truth. There’d been some excuse to account for her delay, and already that fitted in with what I knew of her. Certainly she would not have said that she had been picked up by a middle-aged journalist who had come to Bath to attend a funeral. She spoke again of Jane Austen, of Elizabeth Bennet, and Emma and Elinor. She spoke as though these fictional characters were real. She almost loved them, she said, but that of course could not have been quite true.

“Who were encumbered with low connections and gave themselves airs? Who bestowed their consent with a most joyful alacrity?”

I laughed, and waited for her to tell me. I walked with her to a parked car, a white Mini that had collected a traffic warden’s ticket. Formally we shook hands and all the way to London on the train I thought of her. I sat in the bar drinking one after another of those miniature bottles of whisky that trains go in for, while her face jumped about in my imagination, unnerving me. Again and again her white, even teeth smiled at me. Her eyes were dazzling.

WITHIN A DAY OR TWO I was in Belfast, sending reports to a Washington newspaper and to a syndicate in Australia. As always, I posted photo-copies of everything I wrote to Stoyckov, who operates a news bureau in Prague. Stoyckov used to pay me when he saw me, quite handsomely in a sense, but it was never the money that mattered: it was simply that I saw no reason why the truth about Northern Ireland should not be told behind the Iron Curtain as well as in Washington and Adelaide.

I had agreed to do a two months’ stint—no longer, because from experience I knew that Belfast becomes depressing. Immediately afterwards I was to spend three days in Madrid, trying to discover if there was truth in the persistent rumour that the Pope was to visit Spain next year. “Great Christ alive”, Charlotte used to scream at me, “call this a marriage?”

In Belfast the army was doing its best to hush up a rape case. I interviewed a man called Ruairi O Baoill, whom I’d last seen drilling a gang of terrorists in the Syrian desert. “My dear fellow, you can hardly call this rape”, a Major Trubstall insisted. “The girl was yelling her head off for it.” But the girl had been doing no such thing; the girl was whey-faced, unable to stop crying; the girl was still in pain, she’d been rushed to hospital to have stitches. “Listen”, Major Trubstall said, pushing a great crimson face into mine. “If a girl goes out drinking with four soldiers, d’you think she isn’t after something?” The Red Hand of Ulster meant what it said, O Baoill told me: the hand was waiting to grasp the hammer and the sickle. He doesn’t say it to his followers, and later he denied that he had said it at all.

Ruairi O Baoill is a sham, I wrote. And so, it would appear, is a man called Major Trubstall. Fantasy rules, I wrote, knowing it was the truth.

All the time in Northern Ireland and for three days in Spain, Dorothea's voice continued about Emma and Elinor and Elizabeth Bennet, and Mrs Elton and Mr Woodhouse. I kept imagining us together in a clean, empty house that appeared to be our home. Like smoke evaporating, my failed marriage wasn't there any more. And my unhappy childhood slipped away also, as though touched by magic.

“DOROTHEA?”

“No, this is her mother. Please hold on. I'll fetch her.”

I waited for so long I began to fear that this was Mrs Lysarth's way of dealing with unwelcome telephone callers. I felt that perhaps the single word I'd spoken had been enough to convey an image of my unsuitableness, and my presumption.

“Yes?” Dorothea's voice said.

“It's Terris. Do you remember?”

“Of course I remember. Are you in Bath again?”

“No. But at least I've returned from Northern Ireland. I'm in London. How are you, Dorothea?”

“I'm very well. Are you well?”

“Yes.” I paused, not knowing how to put it.

“It's kind of you to ring, Terris.”

“D'you think we might meet?”

“Meet?”

“It would be nice to see you.”

She didn't answer. I felt I had proposed marriage already, that it was that she was considering. “It doesn't matter”, I began to say.

“Of course we must meet. Would Thursday do? I have to be in London then.”

“We could have lunch again.”

“That would be lovely.”

And so it was. We sat in the bow window of an Italian restaurant in Romilly Street, and when anyone glanced in I felt inordinately proud. It was early September, a warm, clear day without a hint of autumn. Afterwards we strolled through Leicester Square and along Piccadilly. We were still in Green Park at six o'clock. “I love you, Terris”, Dorothea said.

HER MOTHER smiled a slanting smile at me, head a little on one side. She laid down an embroidery on a round, cane frame. She held a hand out.

“We've heard so much”, she said, still smiling, and then she introduced her sons. While we were drinking sherry Dorothea's father appeared, a thin, tall man, with spectacles on a length of leather, dancing on a tweed waistcoat.

“My dear fellow.” Vaguely he smiled and held a hand out: an amateur archaeologist, though by profession a medical doctor. That I was the divorced, middle-aged man whom his young daughter wished to marry was not a fact that registered in his face. Dorothea had shown me a photograph of him, dusty in a crumpled linen suit, holding between finger and thumb a piece of glazed terra-cotta. “A pleasure”, he continued as vaguely as before. “A real pleasure.”

“A pleasure to meet you, Dr Lysarth.”

“Oh, not at all.”

“More sherry?” Dorothea said, pouring me whisky because she knew I probably needed it.

“That's whisky in that decanter, Dorothea”, her brother Adam pointed out and while I was saying it didn't matter, that whisky actually was what I preferred, her other brother, Jonathan, laughed.

“I'm sure Mr Terris knows what he wants”, Mrs Lysarth remarked, and Dorothea said:

“Terris is his Christian name.”

“Oh, I'm so sorry.”

“You must call him Terris, Mother. You cannot address a prospective son-in-law as Mister.”

“Please do”, I urged, feeling a word from me was necessary.

“Terris?” Adam said.

“Yes, it is an odd name.”

The brothers stood on either side of Dorothea's chair in that flowery drawing-room. There were pale blue delphiniums in two vases on the mantelpiece, and roses and sweet peas in little vases everywhere. The mingled scent was delicious, and the room and the flowers seemed part of the family the Lysarths were, as did the way in which Adam and Jonathan stood, protectively by their sister.

They were twins, both still at Cambridge. They had their mother's oval face, the pale blue eyes their parents shared, their father's languid tallness. I was aware that however

protective they might seem they were not protecting Dorothea from me: I was not an interloper, they did not resent me. But their youth made me feel even older than I was, more knocked about and less suitable than ever for the role I wished to play.

"You've travelled a great deal", Mrs Lysarth said. "So Dorothea says."

"Yes, I have."

I didn't say I'd been an only child. I didn't mention the seaside town where I'd spent my childhood, or reveal that we'd lived in a kind of disgrace really, that my father worked ignominiously in the offices of the trawling business which the family had once owned. Our name remained on the warehouses and the fish boxes, a daily reminder that we'd slipped down in the world. I'd told Dorothea, but I didn't really think all that would interest the other Lysarths.

"Fascinating, to travel so", Mrs Lysarth remarked, politely smiling.

After dinner Dr Lysarth and I were left alone in the dining-room. We drank port in a manner which suggested that had I not been present Dr Lysarth would have sat there drinking it alone. He talked about a Roman pavement, twenty feet below the surface somewhere. Quite suddenly he said:

"Dorothea wants to marry you."

"We both actually—"

"Yes, so she's told us."

I hesitated. I said, "I'm—I'm closer to your age, in a way, than to hers."

"Yes, you probably are. I'm glad you like her."

"I love her."

"Of course."

"I hope", I began.

"My dear fellow, we're delighted."

"I'm a correspondent, Dr Lysarth, as Dorothea I think has told you. I move about a bit, but for the next two years I'll be in Scandinavia."

"Ah yes." He pushed the decanter towards me. "She's a special girl, you know."

"Yes, I do know, Dr Lysarth."

"We're awfully fond of her. We're a tightly bound family—well, you may have noticed. We're very *much* a family."

"Yes, indeed."

"But of course we've always known that Dorothea would one day wish to marry."

"I know I'm not what you must have

imagined, Dr Lysarth, when you thought of Dorothea's husband. I assure you I'm aware of that."

"It's just that she's more vulnerable than she seems to be: I just want to say that. She's really a very vulnerable girl."

The decanter was again moved in my direction. The tone of voice closed the subject of Dr Lysarth's daughter. We returned to archaeological matters.

I SPENT THAT NIGHT at Wistaria Lodge and noticed at breakfast time how right Dr Lysarth had been when he'd said that the family was a tightly bound one. Conversation drifted from one Lysarth to the next in a way that was almost artificial, as though the domestic scenes I witnessed belonged in the theatre. I formed the impression that the Lysarths invariably knew what was coming next, as though their lines had been learnt. My presence was accommodated through a telepathy that was certainly as impressive, another piece of practised theatre.

"Yes, we're like that", Dorothea said in the garden after breakfast. "We never seem to quarrel."

She taught me how to play croquet and when we'd finished one game we were joined by her brothers. Adam was the best of the three, and he, partnering Dorothea, easily beat Jonathan and myself. Mrs Lysarth brought a tray of drinks to a white table beside the lawn and we sat and sipped in the sunshine, while I was told of other games of croquet there had been, famous occasions when the tempers of visitors had become a little ragged.

"It's a perfect training for life", Mrs Lysarth said, "the game of croquet."

"Cunning pays", Adam continued. "Generosity must know its place."

"Not that we are against generosity, Terris", Adam said. "Not that we're on the side of cunning."

"What a family poor Terris is marrying into!" Dorothea cried, and on cue her mother smiled and added: "Terris is a natural croquet player. He will one day put you all to shame."

"I doubt that very much." And as I spoke I felt I said precisely what was expected of me.

"You must teach the Scandinavians, Dorothea", Adam said. "Whatever else, you

must flatten out a lawn in your little Scandinavian garden."

"Oh yes, of course we shall. So there."

After lunch Dorothea and I went for a walk. We had to say good-bye because that evening I was to go away; when I returned it would almost be the day we'd set for our wedding. We walked slowly through the village and out into the country. We left the road and passed along a track by the side of a cornfield. We rested by a stream which Dorothea had often told me about, a place she'd come to play with her brothers as a child. We sat there, our backs against the same ivy-covered tree-stump. We talked about our being married, of beginning our life together in Copenhagen. I made love to Dorothea by her stream, and it was afterwards that she told me the story of Agnes Kemp. She began it as we lay there and continued while we washed and tidied ourselves and began the journey back to Wistaria Lodge.

"She was twelve at the time, staying with us while her parents were abroad. She fell from the beech tree. Her neck was broken."

I only nodded because there isn't much anyone can say when a fact like that is related.

"I had always wanted to climb that tree, I had been told I never must. 'I dare you', she said. 'I dare you, Dorothea.' I was frightened, but when no one was looking we climbed it together, racing one another to the top."

She spoke of the funeral of Agnes Kemp, how the dead child's parents had not been present because it had been impossible to contact them in time. "We don't much hear of them now", Dorothea said. "A card at Christmas. Agnes was an only child."

We walked a little in silence. Then I said: "What was she like?"

"Oh, she was really awfully spoilt. The kind of person who made you furious."

I suppose it was that last remark that started everything off, that and the feeling that Wistaria Lodge was a kind of theatre. The remark passed unnoticed at the time, for even as she made it Dorothea turned round, and smiled and kissed me. "It's all forgotten now", she said when that was over, "but of course I had to tell you."

It was certainly forgotten, for when we arrived in the garden the white table had been moved beneath the beech tree out of the glare of the sun, and tea with scones and sandwiches

and cake was spread all over it. I felt a dryness in my mouth that was not dispelled when I drank. I found it hard to eat, or even to smile in unison with the smiling faces around me. I kept seeing the spoilt child on the grass and Dr Lysarth bending over her, saying she was dead, as no doubt he must have. I kept thinking that the beech tree should have been cut down years ago, no matter how beautiful it was.

"**Y**OU'RE MAD", Charlotte shouted at me more than once. "You're actually mad." Her voice in its endless repetition is always a reminder of my parents' faces, that worry in their eyes. All I had wanted to know was the truth about ourselves: why did the offices and the warehouses still bear our name, what had my grandfather done? "Best just left", my mother said. "Best not bothered with." But in the end they told me because naturally I persisted—at eight and twelve and eighteen: naturally I persisted. My grandfather had been a criminal and that was that: a drunkard and an embezzler, a gambler who had run through a fortune in a handful of years: I'd guessed, of course, by the time they told me. I didn't know why they'd been so reluctant, or why they'd displayed concern when I persisted about Miss MacNamara: why did she weep when she walked along the promenade? I had to guess again, because all my childhood Miss MacNamara's tears possessed me so: she wept for the music teacher, who was married and had a family, and I did not forgive my parents for wishing to keep that covered up. Passionately I did not forgive them, although my mother begged me, saying I made myself unhappy. "You sound so noble", Charlotte snapped at me. "Yet what's so marvellous about exposing a brothel-keeper for peddling drugs? Or a grimy pederast and a government minister?" Charlotte's mother called her "a tricky kind of customer." And tricky was just the word. Tricky, no doubt, with bank tellers and men met idly in bars. Tricky in beds all over the place, when I was so often away, having to be away.

I crossed the bedroom to the window. The beech tree was lit by moonlight now. Gazing at it, I heard the voices that had haunted me ever since Dorothea told me the story.

"Then I dare you to", Dorothea angrily shouts, stopping suddenly and confronting the other girl.

"You're frightened of it, Dorothea. You're frightened of a tree."

"Of course I'm not."

"Then I dare you to."

In the garden the boys, delighted, listen. Their sister's cheeks have reddened. Agnes Kemp is standing on one foot and then the other, balancing in a way she has, a way that infuriates Dorothea.

"You're a horrid person", Dorothea says. "You aren't even pretty. You're stupid and spoilt and greedy. You always have two helpings. There's something the matter with your eyes."

"There isn't, Dorothea Lysarth. You're jealous, that's all."

"They're pig's eyes."

"You're just afraid of a tree, Dorothea."

They climb it, both at the same time, from different sides. There's a forked branch near the top, a sprawling knobbly crutch, easily distinguishable from the ground: they race to that.

The boys watch, expecting any moment that an adult voice will cry out in horror from the house, but no voice does. The blue dress of Agnes Kemp and the white one of Dorothea disappear into a mass of leaves, the boys stand further back, the dresses reappear. Agnes Kemp is in front, but their sister has chosen a different route to the top, shorter it seems. The boys long for their sister to win because if she does Agnes Kemp will at least be quiet for a day or two. They don't call out, although they want to: they want to advise Dorothea that in a moment she will have overtaken her challenger; they don't because their voices might attract attention from the house. From where they stand they can hear the grandfather clock in the hall striking ten. Most of the windows are open.

Dorothea slips and almost falls. Her shoes aren't right for climbing and when she glances to her left she can see that Agnes's are: Agnes has put on tennis shoes, knowing she will succeed that morning in goading Dorothea. This is typical of her, and when it is all over Dorothea will be blamed because of course Agnes will blurt it out, in triumph if she wins, in revenge if she doesn't.

The blue dress reaches the fork and then

advances along one of its prongs, further than is necessary. Dorothea is a yard behind. She waits, crouched at the knobbly juncture, for Agnes Kemp's return. The boys don't understand that. They stare, wondering why their sister doesn't climb down again so that they can all three run away from Agnes Kemp, since it is running away from her that has been in their minds since breakfast time. They watch while Agnes Kemp reaches a point at which to pose triumphantly. They watch while slowly she creeps backwards along the branch. Their sister's hand reaches out, pulling at the blue dress, at the child who has been such a nuisance all summer, who'll be worse than ever after her victory. There is a clattering among the leaves and branches. Like a stone, the body strikes the ground.

"**N**OW WHAT DID anyone dream?" Mrs Lysarth enquired at breakfast. Knives rattled on plates, toast crackled, Dr Lysarth read *The Times*. It was a family thing to talk about dreams, and it had ages ago been established that there were dreaming seasons, a period when dreams could be remembered easily and a time when they could not. It was all another Lysarth game.

"I'd been skipping French classes again", Adam said. "For a year or even longer I'd been keeping so low a profile that Monsieur Bertain didn't even know I existed. And then some examination or other loomed."

"Adam often has that dream", Dorothea confided to me.

"I was in Istanbul", Jonathan said, "or at least it seemed like Istanbul. A man was selling me a stolen picture. A kind of goat, by Marc Chagall."

"I had only a wisp of a thing", Mrs Lysarth said. "A bit out of Dorothea's birth."

"I dreamed that Terris's wife was pickling scallions in the garden", Dorothea said. "You're wrong to think there's been a divorce, she said."

"Did you dream, Terris?" Mrs Lysarth asked, buttering toast, but I was so confused about the night that had passed that I thought it better to say I hadn't.

"What's the criterion for *As You Like It*, ten letters, beginning with 'T'?" Dr Lysarth asked.

"Touchstone", Dorothea said, and another

Lysarth game began. "Lord of Eden End" was "North", "poet's black tie ruined by vulcanised rubber" was "ebonite." Within ten minutes the crossword puzzle was complete.

The faces laughed and smiled around the breakfast table, the conversation ran about. Especially for my benefit a description of Monsieur Bertain, Adam's French master, was engaged upon. His accent was imitated, his war wound designated as the cause of his short temper. Dr Lysarth looked forward to a dig in Derbyshire in the autumn; his wife was to accompany him and would, as always on archaeological occasions, spend her time walking and reading. Jonathan said he intended to visit us in Scandinavia. Dorothea pressed him and I found myself doing the same.

In the sunny room, while marmalade was passed and the flowered china had all the prettiness of a cottage garden, the horror was nonsensical. Mrs Lysarth's elegance, her perfect features and her burnished hair, would surely not be as they were. No wrinkles creased her face; the doctor's eyes were honestly untroubled, forget-me-not blue, a darker shade than Dorothea's. And Dorothea's hands would surely be less beautiful? The fingers clawing at the blue dress would have acquired some sign, a joint arthritic, a single bitten nail. The faces of the boys could not have shed all traces of the awful ugliness. "Dear, it isn't our affair, why Miss MacNamara is troubled", my mother agitatedly protested. "Senseless", Charlotte shouted. "You frighten me with your senseless talk."

On Tuesday afternoon, three days away, we would marry and the car would take us to the station at Bath after the champagne on the lawn. Our flight to Paris was at five past seven, we would have dinner in the Chez les Anges. We would visit Versailles and Rouen, and the Jeu de Paume because Dorothea had never been there. I may for a moment have closed my eyes at the breakfast table, so lost was I in speculation and imaginings.

"Well, I have a surgery", Dr Lysarth announced, folding the newspaper as he rose from the table.

"And I have Castlereagh to wonder about", Adam said. "That fascinating figure."

For a moment in the sunny room the brothers again stood by Dorothea, an accidental conjunction or perhaps telepathy

came into play: perhaps they guessed the contents of my mind. There was defiance in their stance, or so I thought.

"WHEN I WAS LITTLE I used to ride here on my ponies. On Jess first. Later on Adonis."

We walked as we had on the day we'd made love, through a spinney, along the track by the cornfield. Poppies, not in bloom before, were everywhere now, cow-parsley whitened the hedges.

"The first thing I remember", Dorothea said, "is that bits of grass had got into my pram."

I told myself that I should mention Agnes Kemp myself, but I did not do so. And when we reached the stream I did not embrace the girl who was to be my bride in a few days' time. We sat with our backs against the tree-trunk, watching the ripple of the water.

"I was lifted up", Dorothea said, "and there was a great tutting while the grass cuttings were removed. Years went by before I can remember anything else."

Murder was not like stealing a pencil-sharpener at school, or spilling something. Agnes Kemp had been detested, a secret had afterwards become a way of life. Few words had perhaps been spoken within the family, Dr Lysarth's giving the cause of death as a broken neck being perhaps the only announcement as to how the future was to be. The faces of the boys on the lawn returned to me, and Dorothea's face as she looked down at the still body. Had she afterwards ridden her pony, Jess or Adonis, whichever it happened to be, by the cornfield and the poppies? "I dreamed of Agnes", was what she didn't say at breakfast any more because the family had exorcised the ghost.

ALONE, MISS MACNAMARA walks; the winter waves tumble about. "Sea-spray", my mother lies. "Sea-spray on her cheeks, dear." How can my father, morning after morning, leave our gaunt house in order to perform his ignominious work, pretending it is work like any other? How can he hope that I will not scratch away their falsehoods? My

father is caught like a creature in a trap, for ever paying back the debts his own father has incurred. It isn't nice, Miss MacNamara and a music teacher; it isn't nice, the truth in Northern Ireland. None of it is nice. "No, no", they tell me, "you must be quiet, Terris." But I am always quiet. I make no noise in the small grey room where I have to be alone because, so they say, it is better so. The room is full of falseness: then I must write it down, they tell me, quite triumphantly; it will be easier if I write it down.

Americans give arms away, Russians promise tanks. I stand again in the cathedral at Vézelay, pleased that Pope Boniface exposed the pretence about Mary Magdalene,

Charlotte passes me a drink, smiling with ersatz affection. Our fingers touch, I know how she has spent that afternoon. "Poor Dorothea", Mrs Lysarth comforts, and the boys are angry because Dorothea has always needed looking after, ever since the day of the accident, the wretched death of a nuisance. I know I am right, as that pope knew also. They hold me and buckle the thing on to me, but still I know I am right. Flowers are arranged in vases, croquet played beneath the beech tree. Ruairi O Baoill adopts a hero's voice to proclaim his pretence of a cause, Major Trubstall's smile is loaded with hypocrisy. The blue dress flutters and is still, telling me again that I am right.

Questions

Prepare yourself for the message.

You are prepared?

Silence.

Silence is the message.

The message is

Wait.

Are you sure? An echo?

An echo of an echo?

Sound.

Was it always there

with us failing

to hear it?

What was the shell doing

on the shore? An ear, endlessly

drinking?

What? Sound? Silence?

Which came first?

Listen,

I'll tell you a story,

as it was told me by the teller

of stories.

Where did he hear it?

By listening? To silence? To sound?

To an echo? To an echo

of an echo?

Wait.

R. S. Thomas

PRESS

Lord Mountbatten, Cecil King, Sir Solly Zuckerman

The So-Called "Military Coup" of 1968

What Really Happened—By HUGH CUDLIPP

WHEN on active service in journalism for forty-six years (the crackle of writs still disturbs me at night) I defended to the death and against all comers, especially academics, the noble intentions and ethical standards (and so on and so forth) of the British Press. After seven years of reflection away from Fleet Street I am still a compulsive newspaper reader, but the sword is not drawn so impetuously from its scabbard. I reluctantly concede what others have long asserted, that the truth about newspapers is that they do not always tell the truth.

On 29 March this year the readers of *The Sunday Times* were offered a news story beginning with a fanfare of high promise:

"A week of bizarre revelations from the murky world of Britain's domestic intelligence service, MI5, has culminated in possibly the most arresting extravagance of all: that MI5 was once obliged to take seriously a plot to overthrow the [British] government by military coup."

By any reckoning—bizarre, murky, or arresting—

HUGH CUDLIPP was for thirty years one of the most creative of Fleet Street editors; in his time the "Daily Mirror" had the largest newspaper circulation in the world, and the International Publishing Corporation (where he succeeded Cecil Harmsworth King as chairman) was a vast inter-continental empire. During the period 1964–1971 Cecil King and Hugh Cudlipp were the publishers of *ENCOUNTER*. Cudlipp was knighted in 1973 and created a Baron (Life Peer) in 1974. Among his books are: "Publish and Be Dammed!" (1955); "Walking on the Water" (1976); and a volume of critical studies in journalism entitled "The Prerogative of the Harlot" (1980).

it seemed value for money even at 35p a copy, coming as it did at the end of a week in which it had been said that Sir Roger Hollis *may* have been a Soviet agent during his 30 years' service at MI5. All that, and now this to brighten a wet Sunday.

The story continued that the "military plot" occurred in 1968; that it was revealed by Sir Martin Furnival Jones, a former head of MI5; that, after an investigation by the secret service, he reported the facts and the names of some of those involved (including one major-general), to Mr James Callaghan, then Home Secretary. Sir Martin was said to have told the writers of the piece that the conspirators were "civil servants and military" and to have described them as a "pretty loony crew." The newspaper also reported that (according to Sir Martin) the Home Secretary was "not slow to act" on the report although no one was subsequently charged and none of the military men involved in the plot was disciplined: i.e., the Home Secretary was not slow to act in taking no action.

I do not know whether in 1968, at a time when the morale of Harold Wilson's Government and of the nation was at a low ebb, there was in fact a plot to overthrow the Government by military coup, but *The Sunday Times'* promise of "possibly the most arresting" domestic intelligence "extravagance" of all was fulfilled. The newspaper involved the names of Earl Mountbatten of Burma and Mr Cecil Harmsworth King in the military-coup-that-was-or-wasn't, implying that they were associated with the "pretty loony crew", and stating that some confirmation of Mountbatten's involvement had been written by me.

Two separate situations were deliberately and inextricably mixed—well, almost inextricably—and the result was a week of innuendo, half-truths and fabrication in which the "quality" newspapers rather than the "pops" made the running.

We still hear a great deal about the shackles the Press has to endure from the law of libel and from contempt of court in the pursuit of its high-minded ideals; at the end of my analysis of how a story gets mistold I came to the melancholy conclusion that the Press should also be concerned about the contempt of factual realism, also known as the simple truth.

THE SECOND HALF of *The Sunday Times*' extravagance included a remarkable statement attributed to Lady Falkender, who as Mrs Marcia Williams was personal and political secretary to Sir Harold Wilson from 1956 and also the author of her memoirs entitled *Inside No. 10* (1972). It said:

"In an interview with Barrie Penrose and Roger Courtiour she named the late Earl Mountbatten as a prime mover in the plan, assisted by 'elements' in the army and the City. 'Mountbatten had a map on the wall of his office showing how it could be done. Harold and I used to stand in the State Room at No. 10 and work out where they would put the guns. We reckoned they would site them in the Horse Guards', she said."

Did they so reckon, and did Lady Falkender say this? I do not know.

Earlier in the story the phrase "Lady Falkender was saying three years ago" was used; and presumably the statement attributed to her about Lord Mountbatten had also been made some three years earlier. There is no need to speculate upon why the allegation, whoever made it, was not published until 29 months after Mountbatten had been murdered by Irish bomb-planters in County Sligo.

Did "a hint of Mountbatten's involvement appear in the autobiography of the former IPC chairman, Hugh Cudlipp"? Did Cudlipp "describe how his predecessor, Cecil King, called him to a meeting with Mountbatten and Lord Zuckermann [*sic*: his name was spelt wrongly four times] on 8 May 1968, at Mountbatten's London flat"? Did Cudlipp "say" that King asked Mountbatten to serve as head of an alternative government once Wilson had been "ousted"? Did Mountbatten make "strenuous efforts to have this section of Cudlipp's book removed before publication"?

The answer to each of these four assertions published in the news story is *No*. There was no "hint" in Cudlipp's book of Mountbatten's involvement in a military plot. He did not "describe" how Cecil King had called him to a meeting with Mountbatten (the meeting was arranged by Cudlipp himself). Cudlipp did not "say" that King had ever referred to the *ousting* of Mr Wilson or had *asked* Mountbatten to do anything; he was not in a position to oust or to offer, nor did he pretend that he was. The claim by Simon Freeman, Barrie Penrose, and Colin Simpson, the authors of the

piece, that "we have evidence that Mountbatten made strenuous efforts to have this section of Cudlipp's book removed before publication" was news to me. No such evidence exists; what does exist is evidence to the contrary.

THE IMPORTANCE of the "extravagance" was the *dramatis personae*. By any yardstick Mountbatten could be assessed as a useful chap in a military coup or in a Great Train Robbery; Sir Solly (now Lord) Zuckerman was currently Chief Scientific Adviser to Her Majesty's Government; Cecil King (a nephew of Lord Northcliffe who had known a thing or two about political skulduggery) was chairman of the International Publishing Corporation, the largest enterprise of its sort in the world and the controllers of the daily popular newspaper with the largest circulation. The *Daily Mirror* was a potential propaganda machine for which Dr Joseph Goebbels would have given his club foot. One can appreciate the temptations that inspired the newspaper script-writers, but God help the historians.

THE MONDAY cold-shower "follow-up" of sensational stories in the Sunday newspapers is traditional in British journalism. The quality papers specialise in this sanitary exercise, but this time they added to the confusion and, in some cases, magnified the falsehoods. Newspaper readers (including me) who rely on the investigative journalism of *The Sunday Times* and on the authenticity of its stablemate, *The Times*, as a daily newspaper of record, were on this occasion the first to be hoodwinked. The same London presses at 200 Gray's Inn Road were printing a different story the next day. *The Times* of March 30 said:

"In a statement to the Press Association Sir Harold Wilson described the report, in *The Sunday Times*, as an 'unwarranted slur' on the memory of the late earl."

So far so good. But Sir Harold himself compounded the confusion by adding:

"It is true, as the newspaper says, that one or two people high up in the press approached Lord Mountbatten to discuss their plan for a coup to take over the machinery of government. Mountbatten and Sir Solly Zuckerman sent them packing in the best quarter-deck manner."

The Sunday Times did attempt to link "the Loony Military Plot" with the Mountbatten-King meeting, an entirely separate event. *But the newspaper did not say that one or two people high up in the press approached Mountbatten to discuss their plan for a coup*. Mountbatten and Zuckerman did not send them packing in the best or worst quarter-

deck manner; Solly sent himself packing, and the remaining trio parted in a manner described later in Mountbatten's letter to me (which I reproduce below).

The Times' headline of 30 March

MOUNTBATTEN ROLE
IN 1968 COUP DISCUSSION
DENIED BY SIR HAROLD

was an unwarranted slur on Cecil King: there was no coup discussion. At the end of its story *The Sunday Times* allotted 18 lines to Cecil King's version of the meeting with Mountbatten:

"King said that when they met he told Mountbatten that the Wilson Government was pushing the country into chaos and that it would be hard to 'get the situation sorted out . . . without chaos.' He advised Mountbatten, however, to wait for the time being. 'I told him the time might come when he had a role to play. His connections with the Royal Family and the army would make him, I said, a key figure. If that happened I said it was important that he kept his hands clean, that he didn't have any embarrassing past history.'"

No mention of a coup. In *The Times*' story of 30 March there was this sentence: "Mr King said the question of a coup was not raised by anybody." Yet the headline referred to "1968 coup discussion."

IT IS NECESSARY HERE to refer to a denial, in addition to Sir Harold's, in *The Times* of 30 March. It reported that Sir Martin Furnival Jones had denied that he had disclosed details of any investigation (i.e., into "the Loony Military Plot") and had said that *The Sunday Times* had misquoted him "on a number of quite important particulars." The newspaper in its next issue claimed that Sir Martin's statement that he had been misquoted was "incorrect."

A reference to the quotes or misquotes of Sir Martin appeared also on 30 March in the *Daily Telegraph*:

"Yesterday Sir Martin, who refused to discuss his work while in charge of MI5, said: 'This does not report me at all accurately. I cannot make any comment on this other than to say you are barking up the wrong tree.'"

The Guardian was lazy and thoughtless, swallowing the Sunday newspaper story hook, line and sinker. One extract will suffice:

"*The Sunday Times* said that a plot to remove the Wilson Government became the subject of a secret service investigation. . . . Lord Mountbatten's alleged involvement had been described previously by former IPC chairman Hugh Cudlipp in his autobiography."

The story was two days old; but by now the newspapers had implied or stated that hints or statements or descriptions by me in a book published in 1976 substantiated the allegation that Cecil King had been involved in May 1968 in a plan or plot to overthrow or oust the Wilson Government by a military or political coup and had invited the aid of Earl Mountbatten in his seditious plan, or—according to another source—our seditious plan.

WHAT DID I write about what was said and occurred at that meeting on 8 May 1968?

My version appeared in *Walking on the Water* (published by The Bodley Head in 1976). After describing Cecil King's mounting disillusionment with Harold Wilson's leadership and the need, as he saw it, for a businessman's government, or a national or coalition government, or an *Emergency* Government (he was by no means the sole advocate of such measures at that time), I wrote:

"The name of Mountbatten of Burma now recurred in the Saturday morning thinking sessions. In an era when the reputation of politicians had sunk so low, when nothing short of a revival of national pride led by disinterested men of power and action would change the course of events, it occurred to King that this legendary personality in the history of our times was surely the man of the hour as the titular head of the Emergency Government. . . .

"The trouble", said Cecil, 'is that he is not the sort of person I know.'

"By a coincidence I had heard from Lord Mountbatten that morning . . . it was merely a pleasant thank-you letter for something I had done. But I mentioned that, like many others, I had been on friendly terms with Lord Mountbatten for some years. Cecil decided that a meeting with Earl Mountbatten at that crucial stage might be advisable, even propitious, and there occurred that week-end another of those coincidences familiar to people who run newspapers. On the Saturday evening Edward Pickering was standing in for me at the Burma Star Association annual reunion at the Albert Hall (the *Mirror* helped them in putting together their programme, gathering advertisements) and had a good deal of conversation with the star of the evening, their wartime Supremo. When 'Pick' mentioned that I was on the Solent that week-end Lord Mountbatten said he particularly wanted to see me—could we meet at Broadlands in Romsey, his country house where the Queen and Prince Philip honeymooned in 1947.

"The meeting took place at Broadlands on Monday morning over a glass of sherry. . . . He was as deeply concerned about the morale and

problems of the nation as anyone else, and more than most, but whereas Cecil King's approach to the 'forthcoming crisis' was essentially political (chopping down the Rt Hon. Harold Wilson) and economic (sweeping measures under a new régime in which he would himself be playing a leading part), Lord Mountbatten's approach was more circumspect and philosophical. Political manoeuvre, in favour of whatever person or persons or faction, however lofty and disinterested the motives, was none of the business of the man who was 'Uncle Dickie' to both the Queen and her husband and Personal ADC to Her Majesty since 1953. What he was hoping for was a massive resurgence of the British spirit.

"I arranged a meeting between King and Mountbatten and myself for 4.30, Wednesday, 8 May 1968 at his London residence, No. 2 Kinnerton Street, SW1. He phoned me on the day to mention he would be accompanied by Sir Solly Zuckerman, then Chief Scientific Adviser to HM Government; there had been no sort of conversation with King on any previous occasion and the move was obviously a precaution. Cecil and I had known Solly for a number of years and the choice seemed felicitous from King's point of view.

"Cecil awaited the arrival of Sir Solly and then at once expounded his views on the gravity of the national situation, the urgency for action, and then embarked upon a shopping-list of the Prime Minister's shortcomings. He spoke with his accustomed candour. He did the talking and I sat back in my chair to observe the reactions, detecting an increasing concern on the part of the two listeners. He explained that in the crisis he foresaw as being just around the corner the Government would disintegrate, there would be bloodshed in the streets, the armed forces would be involved. The people would be looking to somebody like Lord Mountbatten as the titular head of a new administration, somebody renowned as a leader of men who would be capable, backed by the best brains and administrators in the land, to restore public confidence. He ended with a question to Mountbatten—would he agree to be the titular head of a new administration in such circumstances?

"Mountbatten turned to his friend: 'Solly, you haven't said a word so far. What do you think of all this?'

"Sir Solly rose, walked to the door, opened it, and then made this statement: 'This is rank treachery. All this talk of machine guns at street corners is appalling. I am a public servant and will have nothing to do with it. Nor should you, Dickie.' Mountbatten expressed his agreement and Sir Solly departed.

"Only a minute or two elapsed between

Zuckerman's departure and King's. Lord Mountbatten was, as always in my experience, courteous but firm: he explained explicitly but briefly that he entirely agreed with Solly and that that sort of role, so far as he was concerned, was 'simply not on.' His Private Secretary, John Barratt, accompanied Cecil and me to our car."

I DID NOT RECORD IT in my account, but one morsel of the conversation at Broadlands on 6 May 1968 is worth recalling now in view of the wildness of the charges made in the Spring of this year. When he was discussing how a resurgence of the British spirit could come about Mountbatten mentioned a political possibility that surprised me. He wondered whether Mrs Barbara Castle (at that time First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity in Mr Wilson's Government) might possess the personal attributes and qualities of leadership to achieve a national sense of purpose. We all know people who would have considered this a most seditious suggestion; but it was scarcely a notion one would expect from a prime mover in a military plot.

MY VERSION of the Mountbatten-King encounter arose in the following manner. I had always intended to include a leisurely profile of Cecil King in the book, and the event at No. 2 Kinnerton Street was an integral part of the unhappy climax of that extraordinary story. When Mountbatten and I met again at a luncheon of Magazine Editors in London in October 1975 I mentioned my intention and Mountbatten, contrary to raising objections, strenuous or otherwise, agreed to assist in getting the record straight. These are extracts from my letter to him dated 4 November 1975:

"I have told the story of the meeting with you in a way in which it can do no harm to you and Solly, and I do not think we should allow our mutual friend Solly to say: 'Tut, tut, we cannot possibly mention that.' As I see it the important point is that I tell the story correctly and represent your attitude and Solly's in a manner which is proper to the standing of you both. . . . I will not approach Solly until you and I have agreed on what I say about you, but I will not of course mention Solly without his agreement. I *want* to mention him because of the important point that you had him there as a precaution. I promised to write Version One of this episode quickly and did so over the weekend. . . ."

Solly did not say "Tut, tut." Mountbatten replied in a letter from Broadlands dated 6 November 1975:

"My dear Hugh,

Thank you for your letter and enclosure of 4th November, which I had the opportunity of discussing with Solly as we both happened to be in London on Wednesday evening.

Your description of the interview is incomplete and inaccurate. I have discussed this with Solly and my Private Secretary, John Barratt, who was coming down from his office and had reached the landing to my sitting room when he heard Solly make his statement.

All three of us agree that Solly said words to this effect: 'This is rank treachery. All this talk of machine guns at street corners is appalling. I am a public servant and will have nothing to do with it, nor should you, Dickie.' I expressed my agreement with him. He then left.

The remarks in the first six lines of paragraph 2 of page 6 were made while Solly was still present and were in fact introductory to Cecil King's final invitation to me which caused Solly to make his statement and leave.

John Barratt saw Solly out and as he came back up the stairs the door opened again and you both came out, and he saw you out. Not more than a minute or two elapsed between Solly's departure and yours. I was merely courteous and explained explicitly and briefly that I entirely agreed with Solly and that that sort of role, so far as I was concerned, was 'simply not on.'

Please delete the last sentence in your draft, as this was a remark made to you in utmost confidence.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Solly. . . .

Yours ever,
Dickie"

I WROTE TO Mountbatten on 11 November:

"I was happy to hear that you had the opportunity to show Solly the piece. It is immeasurably better with the *full* quotation of what Solly said, and my recollection of the words entirely coincides. I have corrected the errors in the sequence of events, and of course deleted the last sentence. The new version is attached. A copy of this letter and of the new version will be posted simultaneously to Solly today."

Lord Zuckerman and I exchanged letters on 11 and 14 November; his reply (it came, ironically, from his home "The Shooting Box") contained additional minor recollections of the meeting and this sentence about his departure:

"Dickie at first wanted to hold me back but I insisted on leaving."

Three of those at the meeting had now agreed on

what was said and what occurred, with additional evidence from a fourth man, John Barratt.

Cecil King disputed and still disputes the whole tenor of it. When I sent him an early copy of *Walking on the Water* he wrote to me (13 October 1976):

"There are various inaccuracies with which I will not bore you, but the interview with Mountbatten, at which I was present, had no resemblance to the one described in your book. The plans and ambitions attributed to me at the end of my time at the *Mirror* are purely fanciful."

The recent resurrection of events and non-events of 1968 at least afforded King a number of opportunities to give his version of affairs.

CECIL KING'S ATTITUDE to Harold Wilson in the opening months of 1968 is relevant at this point: apart from his conversations with politicians and with the executives of the newspapers he controlled he was preparing to express his views in public. Prime Minister Wilson was also aware of the dissatisfaction with his administration at that time. Writing in his memoirs *The Labour Government, 1964-1970* of his return from Moscow (24 January 1968) he said that although things were "quieter" in London "substantial sections of the press were engaged again on a 'Wilson Must Go' campaign."

On 19 February 1968, *The Guardian* devoted a large space on its front page to a story by its political correspondent, Francis Boyd:

"MAKING A NEW START WITH A COALITION GOVERNMENT? MR CECIL KING LEADING THE SOUNDINGS"

King replied: "It is quite untrue to say that I have been 'leading the soundings.' I have certainly been sounding the leaders—it is a publisher's duty to know what is happening." He added: "A coalition at this moment is just not on, and will not become so unless the political situation deteriorates still further, which it may." An interview with Robin Day (to be televised on Sunday, 31 March 1968) produced in advance this *Observer* headline:

WILSON MUST GO,
SAYS CECIL KING

On Friday, 10 May, two days after his meeting with Lord Mountbatten, he gave his views (they were written by and signed by Cecil H. King) on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* under the headline ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, and the substance of the message was:

"Mr Wilson and his Government have lost all credibility; all authority. . . . Mr Wilson is seen

to be a brilliant Parliamentary tactician and nothing more. . . . We are now threatened with the greatest financial crisis in our history. It is not to be removed by lies about our reserves, but only by a fresh start under a fresh leader. It is up to the Parliamentary Labour Party to give us that leader—and soon.”

The cry for a fresh start under a fresh leader has been a recurring theme in the small talk of the human race since Adam and Eve. The mild proposition that the Parliamentary Labour Party should choose the fresh leader was not the language of a desperado engaged that week in a Gunpowder Plot. (King's handwritten manifesto was delivered by him to me before the Mountbatten meeting and was not adjusted because of that meeting.)

FOR TWELVE HOURS on Monday, 30 March 1981, my house near Chichester was besieged by early morning and late night phone calls, reporters, television and radio teams. I welcomed the invasion; here was my opportunity to conduct a coup of my own to topple the fabrications, and to begin to get the record straight. I took advantage of the request from the Press Association for a statement, knowing it would be circulated to all newspapers. It does not take one long in such circumstances to appreciate the value of live TV and radio interviews. However ill-informed or loaded the questions, the articulate know that what they say will not be accidentally misreported, or subjected to mangled or hasty sub-editing, or be selectively quoted or bruised.

The introduction to the news story by the PA reporter, Alan Jones, was another indication of how the Sunday morning myth was edging its way into history:

“A new account was given today in the amazing story that Lord Mountbatten was involved in a plot to overthrow the Government of Sir Harold Wilson in 1968. . . . Lord Cudlipp, former chairman of IPC, gave a dramatic account of a meeting he had with Lord Mountbatten and Mr Cecil King in 1968.”

The dramatic account was a repetition of what I had written in the book (the Authorised Version, disputed by King). I was then correctly quoted as saying:

“I have no idea whether or not some military lunatics were planning a coup to take over Sir Harold Wilson's Government in the later 1960s. I heard nothing of such a plot at the time and neither, to the best of my knowledge, did Mr King hear of it. To connect the name of Lord Mountbatten with such an idea is, in my opinion, infamous. There was no mention of a military coup at the meeting I attended with Lord

Mountbatten, Lord Solly Zuckerman and Mr King on May 8, 1968. I described in my autobiography published in 1976 precisely how that meeting came about and what was said. The statement in *The Sunday Times* that Lord Mountbatten made strenuous efforts to have that section of the book removed is the reverse of the truth. Mr King, as I stated, considered that Mountbatten was the sort of leader people would be looking for as the titular head of a new administration if, as he wrongly prophesied, Wilson's Government disintegrated. The only mention of armed forces by Mr King was in the sense that they would be involved in restoring order after the chaos he was expecting. I am astonished that the whole matter has been revived so many years later.”

Mr Craig Seton, the reporter from *The Times* who arrived to see me on the afternoon of 30 March was carrying a copy of that day's *New Standard*, London's monopoly evening newspaper, which I had the sense to ask to see. The front page was occupied by the following headline:

WILSON, MI5 AND 'A PLOT'

The story contained the following three sentences:

“The former IPC boss Cecil King today described the alleged coup as ludicrous. The coup talks were described by Hugh Cudlipp, who was successor to Mr King, in his autobiography. At his Dublin home Mr King commented: ‘Cudlipp has told a thundering lie.’”

It was a thundering lie but Cudlipp had not told it. King had been misled by *The New Standard* into believing that I had described “the coup talks”, and his immediate response was understandable. At this stage, I confess, I was tempted to give up and leave the rest of the interviews to my parrot. (Did it really matter what the British were told by the British newspapers? Who cared if they believed that Harold Wilson had told the Queen that Mountbatten had tried to blow up Buckingham Palace, that Lord Zuckerman had sent Guy the Gorilla as his stand-in at the Kinnerton Street meeting, that King had thrown Guy down the stairs, narrowly missing John Barratt, and that I had died of laughter. . . .) But I persevered.

THE ART OF MISTELLING A STORY had now reached classic proportions, a prototype useful at propaganda seminars or college courses on journalism.

On Sunday morning “a hint” of Mountbatten's involvement in a plan for a military coup was spuriously attributed to me. By Monday morning I had “described” Mountbatten's alleged involve-

ment in a plot, investigated by MI5, to remove the Wilson Government (not just Harold, the lot!). By Monday afternoon I had "described the coup talks." If that hint or those descriptions had indeed appeared in my book in 1976 why didn't the explosion of 1981 occur then? No journalist asked himself that question; no newspaper, so far, had checked out what I had in fact written.

Mr Louis Kirby, the editor of *The New Standard*, was good enough to publish the retraction requested by me as the sixth reader's letter on p. 13 on 1 April. The correction was not as prominent as the Page One lie and commanded a modest audience, but the truth was now audible. The letter said:

"The allegation on your page one (March 30) that talks about a coup in 1968 were described by me in my autobiography is totally untrue and grossly unfair on Cecil King. I had never heard of this lunatic rumour until this week and there is no mention of a coup, military or otherwise, in my book."

The *New Standard* story afforded Cecil King a further opportunity to say his piece:

"At his Dublin home Mr King commented: 'I had superb political contacts in 1968 and there was no hint of any kind of possible coup. It's absolute rot. . . . To suggest I was involved in any kind of conspiracy is ludicrous. I am just not that type of person.'"

That afternoon I cabled King in Dublin:

"ALL THIS TALK ABOUT AN ALLEGED MILITARY COUP IN 1968 HAS NOT COME FROM ME AT ANY TIME AND IS GROSSLY UNFAIR ON YOU STOP I HAVE EMPHATICALLY DENIED ON RADIO TELEVISION AND IN PRESS INTERVIEWS TODAY THAT EITHER YOU OR I EVER HEARD OF SUCH RUBBISH."

He replied:

"WARMEST THANKS FOR YOUR TELEGRAM WRITING CECIL KING."

I later learned that my telegram had arrived at a crucial moment when yet another man from *The Times* was interviewing him for the "probe" to be published later in the week by that newspaper. Cudlipp's "thundering lie" was therefore eradicated from the confusion; well, almost.

THE FACTS DID NOT BEGIN to emerge in the newspapers until the morning of 31 March. My statement to the PA and an interview with Cecil King were fully reported in *The Daily Telegraph*. The national importance of the extensive news coverage by the *Telegraph* on such occasions becomes swiftly apparent, notably to those

involved. King had a new opportunity of putting his case and referred for the first time to letters the Queen had been receiving "criticising the Government", but he dealt more precisely with this aspect when later talking to *The Times*.

The Times of 31 March reported my statement, pointing out that it was "at odds, however, with the claim by Mr King that Lord Mountbatten called the meeting."

The *Daily Express* gave ample coverage to the denials of any knowledge of coups or military plots, quoting King as saying: "I remember nothing about reference to machine guns on street corners nor do I recall Zuckerman marching out saying 'treachery.' If there had ever been a plot I would never have been in it. And my opinion of Lord Mountbatten, for whom I had the greatest respect, is that he would not have been either."

The *Guardian* report that day was incomprehensible, a hotch-potch of what other papers had or hadn't said. No morning newspapers, except the *Daily Mirror*, repeated the "thundering lie" accusation from Dublin because they realised it had been based upon misinformation from the London evening paper.

DURING HER DEFENCE of Sir Roger Hollis (on 26 March) Mrs Thatcher had already promised a Security Commission review of security procedures; but on 30 March Mr Edward Leadbitter, Labour MP for Hartlepool, wrote to her demanding a specific investigation into alleged discussions involving Mountbatten, Cudlipp, King and Zuckerman suggesting the subversion of a democratically elected government, which "in the view of many represents an act of treachery" (*The Times* report, 31 March). "Either an attempt to plan the overthrow of a Government existed or it did not", said the MP. "The nation must know if it is true one way or the other." I was not surprised Mr Leadbitter had the jitters after everything he had read in the London press.

The Times returned definitively to the battle of words on Friday, 3 April, when its "investigative team" of five by-lined journalists headed by the deputy editor, Mr Louis Heren, reported on their week's probe into what had been written by the three by-lined investigative journalists of *The Sunday Times*, all of whom worked next door in Gray's Inn Road, London. The front-page piece in *The Times* was headlined:

"I KEPT IT CONFIDENTIAL BECAUSE OF THE QUEEN", SAYS FORMER IPC CHAIRMAN. CECIL KING REVEALS DIARY NOTE ON MOUNTBATTEN MEETING

The story began:

"The Queen's reported anxiety about the state of Britain in 1968, when there was loose talk of a *coup d'etat*, led her uncle, the late Lord Mountbatten of Burma, to consult Mr Cecil King, according to his private note of the meeting which he released to *The Times* yesterday. Mr King said that until now he had regarded this entry as confidential, 'especially the part about the Queen. . . . I am mentioning it now because of all the nonsense about plots.'"

The Times concluded its front page curtain-raiser with the words: "intensive inquiries by *The Times* this week have unravelled much of the mystery." The comments I make after the extracts reproduced here will, I trust, unravel more of the mystery.

THE HEADLINE on the 6-column investigation inside the newspaper read: "MOUNTBATTEN AND THE COUP THAT WASN'T QUITE." It performed a service by quoting the three surviving participants of the Kinnerton Street meeting and quoting second-hand observations attributed to the late Earl. Here is the diary note Mr King made on the Kinnerton Street meeting:

"Hugh and I called on Dickie Mountbatten at his request at his flat at 4.30. He insisted that Solly Zuckerman should be there. Dickie spoke of him as a man of invincible integrity and as one of the greatest brains in the world. . . . Solly seemed embarrassed by this and hurried away as soon as he decently could. Dickie does not really have his ear to the ground or understand politics. After Solly had gone, Mountbatten said he had been lunching at the Horse Guards and that morale in the armed forces had never been so low. He said that the Queen was receiving an unprecedented number of petitions, all of which have to be passed on to the Home Office. According to Dickie, she is desperately worried over the whole situation. He is obviously close to her and she is spending this weekend at Broadlands. He asked if I thought there was anything he should do. My theme was that there might be a stage in the future when the Crown would have to intervene: there might be a stage when the armed forces were important. Dickie should keep himself out of public view so as to have clean hands if either emergency should arise in the future. He has no wish to intervene anyway."

When asked why his version differed from those of the others, Mr King said: "Old men forget. It happened 13 years ago, I had a note of it, others did not."

1. Cecil King and others are confused about how the meeting originated. If it was at Mountbatten's

request why did he "insist" that Solly Zuckerman should be there? *The Times* said: "Mountbatten's son-in-law, Lord Brabourne, insists today that it was Mr King who wanted to see Mountbatten. Mr King told us this week: 'Cudlipp gave me a message that Mountbatten wanted me to call at his private house. I did not know why he wanted to see me; there was an invitation from Mountbatten to both of us to see him at his private flat in London.'"

The meeting was instigated by me.

2. The reason for Zuckerman's departure is the major difference in King's and Cudlipp's versions of what occurred at the meeting. Chief Scientific Advisers to HM's Government are not appointed because of their modesty; indeed, none of the foursome at that meeting was noted as a shrinking violet. Was it likely that Solly was embarrassed and hurried away as soon as he decently could at being described by Dickie as a man of invincible integrity? Like any other scientific adviser he would have preferred it in writing, on vellum.

I have two further observations. (a) Cecil King is also a man of invincible integrity and I accept his statement: "I think if I had been accused of treason in such circumstances by a man like that I would have remembered it." Lord Zuckerman speaks softly; King's hearing is not perfect at all ranges; and they were seven or more yards apart at that moment. My explanation is that Solly said it and Cecil didn't hear it.

(b) Lord Zuckerman over-reacted to what King had said, or misunderstood what he had said—King also speaks softly. Solly's abrupt departure surprised me. Treachery is the act (or an instance) of wilful betrayal, or the disposition to betray. Whom could King have been betraying? Before the Kinnerton meeting he had said on television that Wilson should "go"; two days after that meeting, he said in his newspaper that Wilson shouldn't be allowed to stay. Where was the treachery?

3. King referred in his interview to the Queen's correspondence. I repeat here what I told *The Times*: "I do not recollect—I am not saying it did not occur—any mention of the Queen's correspondence."

The five *Times* investigators wrote:

"We have traced the origins of the meeting to a chance encounter at the Albert Hall early in 1968, during the reunion of the Burma Star Association."

I trust that the new proprietor of *The Times*, Mr Rupert Murdoch, did not foot too burdensome an expense account for this penetrating exercise in detection. They merely repeated what I had said in my published narrative about the meeting between Mountbatten and Sir Edward Pickering.

The Times quoted Lord Brabourne as saying: "We were worried about what was going to be

discussed. We had read Mr King's articles (condemning the Wilson government) and it was suggested that Lord Mountbatten should have a witness."

But the one and only article by King condemning Mr Wilson and his Government as having lost all credibility, all authority, appeared in the *Daily Mirror* two days after the Mountbatten meeting.

The Times said: "There is a curious history to the Zuckerman accusation of treachery which Mr King insists was never made. . . . The material was in fact supplied to Cudlipp by Mountbatten. . . . Lord Cudlipp was clearly happy to accept without question Lord Mountbatten's version, as his book shows."

"Curious"? I personally handed to Mr Craig Seton of *The Times* a copy of the Mountbatten letter to me, and he reported what I said: "The principal contribution was an extended version of Lord Zuckerman's remarks when departing from the meeting. The final version was what we had agreed." Had the extended version been contrary to my own recollections I would have said so in my narrative.

The Times' investigators reached this conclusion: "On one point everyone agrees; there was no planning for a military coup." They quoted me: "Cecil King could not have mustered a group of Brownies." They quoted King: "I may make mistakes but I am not a raving lunatic. There was latent dissatisfaction, but nowhere were people going out on the streets. I feared at the time there might be a general strike or something like it."

BUT *THE TIMES* was reluctant to allow the matter to rest at that without a final romp around the rumours:

"Rumours that he [King] was a key figure in a *putsch* backed by senior civil servants, the military and big business began to circulate at about the same time as the *Mirror* article [signed by King] appeared. There was even talk of persuading the Queen to stand aside, of an interregnum in which the Queen Mother and Lord Mountbatten would play key roles, and, most fantastic of all, of exiling Mr Wilson to Scotland. Some people close enough to the centres of power even thought that Mountbatten's 'vanity and sense of destiny' might tempt him to join in. On the other hand, as a former director-general of M15 remarked, these well-known rumours were nothing more than 'loose talk by gin-sodden generals.'"

These rumours did not reach King, me, or the *Daily Mirror*; neither the newspaper nor either of its principal executives was in touch with the gin-sodden generals.

LET ME SUM UP the "evidence" assembled by *The Sunday Times* in launching on 29 March the "extravagance" of Mountbatten's involvement in a military plot:

1. A "hint" in Cudlipp's autobiography. There was no hint.

2. The incriminating statement by *The Sunday Times* that Mountbatten made "strenuous efforts to have this section of Cudlipp's book removed before publication." His letter to me dated 6 November 1975 is the evidence to the contrary; but *The Times* did not draw attention to the significance of the Mountbatten letter in this respect.

3. The statement attributed by *The Sunday Times* to Lady Falkender that she had named Mountbatten as a prime mover in the plan, assisted by "elements" in the army and the City. Sir Harold Wilson the next day described the report as an "unwarranted slur on the memory of the late earl." Whose unwarranted slur, Lady Falkender's or the newspaper's? On 3 April *The Times*, despite its intensive inquiries, was unable to assist; it repeated what *The Sunday Times* had said:

"Lady Falkender suggests that Lord Mountbatten, instead of being an innocent and shocked listener to King, was 'a prime mover' in the supposed coup."

There was no further reference to the baroness in the whole article. Disappointed readers had to wait another two days for the next issue of *The Sunday Times* for a revival of the only feminine interest in the mystery.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE of the second story in that newspaper was clearly that those readers who had been hoodwinked by the first story should remain hoodwinked. There was no withdrawal of the fabrication of the "hint" in my book; no withdrawal of its claim that it had evidence that Mountbatten had tried to censor the book. Instead, the rousing theme: "The Prime Minister will reply tomorrow to allegations that there were plans in 1968 for a military coup to overthrow Harold Wilson's Labour government." The assertion that there had been "reaction throughout the world to last week's report in *The Sunday Times*" merely meant that the baseless allegations had been repeated throughout the world. The newspaper battled with Sir Martin Furnival Jones on who-said-what-to-whom, or didn't; but there was no attempt the second time round to link "the Loony Military Plot" with the conversation at Kinnerton Street. The only mention of Sir Harold Wilson was that he had "confirmed last Sunday's allegations that there had been talk of a coup by people 'high up in the press.'" Not reported was Sir Harold's comment on the allegation attributed to Lady Falkender.

The Sunday Times concluded with as much dignity as it could muster in an extravagant smoke cloud:

"According to Lady Falkender, Wilson learnt about the plot at a luncheon at the Savoy Hotel given by the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee. Zuckerman had mentioned a forthcoming book by Cudlipp which included a passage about the King-Mountbatten meeting in 1968. Lady Falkender said Cudlipp talked in the manuscript about machine guns being placed in London's streets.

"Wilson immediately tried to locate Lady Falkender, who was in the hotel. She said: 'When he heard about it, he was absolutely bursting. We had had it confirmed, so to speak in detail.'

"Although many people in government at the time seem sceptical about the seriousness of the plot, Zuckerman was very cautious when he discussed the matter in 1977. Talking from London Zoo to two journalists, Barrie Penrose and Roger Courtiour, he clearly believed it was a high-risk occupation to speak about it on open telephone lines, and spoke of the call being monitored by the Cabinet Office."

Did he? I don't know. I also do not know whether phone calls to or from the London Zoo are monitored by the Cabinet Office, or vice versa. But who originated the notion that Earl Mountbatten was a prime mover in the plan assisted by elements in the Army and had a map on the wall of his office showing how it could be done? Certainly not Harold Wilson, who described the suggestion as a slur. Certainly not Lord Zuckerman, or King, or Cudlipp—and Lady Falkender was not at the Kinnerton meeting. Would the simplest explanation be the right one, that Lady Falkender misunderstood in that hurried Savoy Hotel phone call what Sir Harold had said he had just been told by Lord Zuckerman?

WE MUST NOT LEAVE Mr Ted Leadbitter, MP, hovering anxiously in the background. On 7 April the Prime Minister replied from Downing Street to his letter:

"Dear Mr Leadbitter,

Thank you for your letter of 30 March.

The reference to the Security Commission which I announced in my statement on 26 March is for a review of the security procedures and practices currently followed in the public service, and they will not be inquiring into allegations about past events.

In any case, I do not think that the allegations to which you refer call for a public inquiry. The three surviving participants have all given their accounts of what is supposed to have passed at

the meeting in question, and I have seen nothing in these accounts or anywhere else to suggest that there was anything that came even remotely near to being a serious conspiracy to undermine or overthrow Parliamentary democracy.

Yours sincerely,
Margaret Thatcher"

In its issue of 7 April *The Guardian* also got it right for the first time. In a perceptive piece its political editor, Ian Aitken, wrote:

"The point at issue has been widely reported, and luridly embroidered, in several newspapers. In essence, it is alleged that there was an investigation by MI5 of a possible plot by some senior civil servants and members of the military. Those involved were recently described by a former head of MI5 as 'a loony crew' comprising 'gin-sodden generals.' But there were parallel allegations that the late Lord Mountbatten had held talks with. . . ."

It was the linking of two parallel events into one that had caused the confusion and tarnished reputations. As for Mr Leadbitter, he was last heard of still grumbling about the contradictions in the recollections of the survivors and challenging the disputants to produce what proof and evidence they had.

WE MUST NOW LEAVE IT to the historians. One must hope that they will not take too seriously the report that appeared in the United States in *Time* (on 13 April) some days after anybody in Britain who cared had got the story straight. Under the headline "SEDITION IN THE ESTABLISHMENT?" the readers of *Time* were told:

"According to Cudlipp's 1976 autobiography, King had sought the assistance of Lord Mountbatten to mount a military coup against the faltering Labour government of then Prime Minister Harold Wilson."

Here we go again.

An exclusive but hitherto unpublished interview with *Time*'s Frank Melville in 1978 quoted Mountbatten as saying: "Cecil King came to see me, at his own request, and said would I take over the country, to which my retort was to kick him out. I asked Mr King to leave, and he left with Cudlipp 20 seconds after Zuckerman. King was a man filled with *folie de grandeur*, saying 'I can fix it.' I said, 'This is rank treason.'"

I do not dispute that Mr Melville was told this by Lord Mountbatten in an expansive, reminiscent mood, offering history a pithy titbit about himself to be published, as it was, after his death. But King did *not* ask Mountbatten to take over the country

and he was *not* kicked out. How the meeting ended was correctly described in Mountbatten's letter to me and confirmed by his assistant John Barratt—"I was asked to show Mr King out. This was done politely. There was no great fracas." King did not say or imply "I can fix it", and the word treachery is upgraded to treason.

Well, the Americans will have to make the best or worst of it; I am afraid it could not have been put right in a five-line letter to *Time*.

But here, in lieu, is some new information that may help the historians. The penultimate paragraph of Mountbatten's letter to me reads:

"Please delete the last sentence in your draft, as this was a remark made to you in utmost confidence."

The confidence was given thirteen years ago and the man who gave it was assassinated more than two years ago; additionally, the Queen has already been brought into the story. These three factors, I consider, justify me in declaring the confidentiality obsolete in the interests of factual realism.

Thirty days after the Kinnerton Street talks, when Mountbatten and I were sitting together at a dinner at Brunel University, he said:

"By the way, I reported all that conversation to H.M."

Would he have reported the talks to the Queen had he been involved as a prime mover in a military plot to exile the Prime Minister to Auchtermuchty and send his and Her Majesty's Government packing?

Ordinary People

The "ordinary" people sing on the edge of the grave.
When the hero howls and weeps they are humming
in the middle of ropes, griefs, the deaths of roses.

The "ordinary" people are not stone,
they are revengeful, bitter, quick to strike and laugh,
and they buy oranges in the market place.

The "ordinary" people say, "I'll not be put upon."
They spend their money freely on food and drink
and then they have no money, only hope.

Where does the hope come from that they see,
who live precariously by the deaths of roses,
and hang their washing among tragedies?

I begin to think there are no "ordinary" people.

Or rather that they've learned about tragedies
from birth, and can simply pass them by
or walk through them clutching food, bottles.

I believe there is no such thing as tragedy,
that the hero has deceived us, is the red infant
howling and screaming from his wooden cage.

Iain Crichton Smith

Michael Charlton

How (and Why) Britain Lost the Leadership of Europe (II)

A Last Step Sideways

AS MAY NOW BE SEEN, with the bright illumination of hindsight, it was at the end of 1955 that Britain turned down the last best chance she had of making the kind of European Community she later wanted.

Astonishingly, Britain had probably come closer to the consideration of throwing in her lot with Europe at the time of the Schuman Plan in 1950 than she had done five years later with the better opportunity of the Common Market. By withdrawing, after six months, from the negotiations in Brussels which followed the Messina conference, the United Kingdom had refused the invitation from France, Germany, Italy, and the BENELUX countries, to help design, as a founder member, the future Common Market. "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide"—and Messina was not perceived by Britain as the moment or the opportunity.

The Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, who probably exercised the biggest influence over that decision, had positively rejected the European concept for Britain. Lord Butler ("Rab" Butler) who was Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time made a significant point, in the first part of our account, about institutional behaviour and Cabinet Government. We have his authoritative word for it that the decision was not widely spread through the Cabinet or the Government machine, but that it was taken on advice from the top of the two big ministries, Foreign Office and Treasury—and in effect, it would seem, by Butler and Eden alone. The attempt to recruit Britain and the continuing efforts in Brussels to establish a general Common Market in Europe were regarded by both Eden and Butler (in Lord Butler's own words) as "a bore"! A bore and therefore an irritant, and a nuisance.

And yet, following Messina, the efforts to "relaunch the European idea", as it was called on

the Continent, could not by then be so readily dismissed as the precipitance of over-eager theorists (which is, more or less, how Britain viewed both the Schuman Plan for the Coal & Steel Community of 1950 and the Defence Community proposal which followed that and failed). Those "Spaak committees" in Brussels—as the British representative to them, Russell Bretherton, had reported home after a while to London—were showing the revival of an all-important tenacity and seriousness of political purpose, though they had yet to demonstrate consolidated success.

But, as Lord Butler has reminded us, there was little apprehension in the Cabinet, and neither he nor Eden believed that the continuing efforts in Brussels would succeed, and because of that, come to sway the whole life of Britain.

THE ISSUE of the Common Market did not receive the Government's concentrated attention in 1955, and, therefore, the British "refusal of Europe" in such a form can hardly be seen as that serious, considered thought of the nation which, in the end, prevails. British public opinion went on in unsuspicious confidence and only began to wake up when the Common Market was already a probable event, with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The European concept made little appeal in government, party, or opposition, or the country or the Press. Harold Macmillan says in his *Memoirs* of the Messina decision that "we were all looking back to the struggles and traditions of the past. . . ."

Therefore, Britain, as it entered 1956, saw no necessity for choice. But events in the four years which now followed were to force it upon her. They included the abortive invasion of the Suez Canal and the humiliation and national self-judgment which went with it; Anthony Eden's downfall; and

the launching and failure of an alternative British design for herself and Europe. By 1958, with the return to power in France of General de Gaulle and the coincidental agreement to create a Common Market, Britain found that Europe was not just being organised without her, but against her.

We might begin this account of those years perhaps with an echo from Lord Butler's own reflections on the Messina decision, remembering how he and Anthony Eden looked at things at the time they said "No" to membership of the European Economic Community in 1955.

BUTLER: "I think the mistake was by that time we were already dismantling our Commonwealth in every way, in some cases already in trade preference. Because, nowadays, what the Conservatives stood for in the old days, with Joseph Chamberlain and protection, is quite out of date, isn't it? And all that has been dismantled, and I think it was rather shortsighted that we didn't realise that something was starting which might make a new combination, you see? For example the comparatively low tariff wall, it doesn't have to be jumped now, does it? It did in those days."

—*The coincidence of these two things—a genuine invitation, one that we could have, should have, found perhaps much easier to accept than the Schuman Plan or the early opportunities to take a lead in Europe immediately after the war, is passed up. . . .*

BUTLER: "Yes."

—*At the same time, Eden particularly seems to wish to reinforce the whole imperial dimension, particularly in the Middle East.*

BUTLER: "In some ways, Anthony Eden has never been really fully studied, because there's been so much abuse. For example, I read an introduction by A. J. P. Taylor to a new book on Eden, which is so rude that you can hardly read it. That's not fair. You see, all that's because of Suez. In his early days Eden was, I think, a slightly old-fashioned Foreign Secretary, and he did almost exactly what the older men in the Foreign Office—the knights', you might call them, at the top—told him to do. Therefore he was, on the whole, very successful. But there's no doubt that the sort of imperialistic trend, and the extraordinary and rather typically British characteristic of being nervous of foreigners, was present in his mind, which you can hardly believe in a Foreign Secretary. But he was slightly old-fashioned."

—*Was there any real resistance to Eden's determination to go on playing a world role for this country, that he wasn't going to be pushed into Europe by the Americans, he wasn't going to be barged out of the position the British had built up?*

BUTLER: "Well, you see, he inherited the old tradition, didn't he?"

AT THE END of 1955 the Prime Minister reshuffled his Cabinet. Butler was replaced as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Harold Macmillan.

Selwyn Lloyd went to the Foreign Office. This has usually been seen as Eden wishing to have a more compliant figure, and incidentally a less avowedly "European" one, in the Prime Minister's own special domain of foreign policy—where Anthony Eden's own authority was in consequence augmented.

However, in the important months while he was Foreign Secretary, Macmillan appears not to have taken any forward position, in advance of his colleagues, over events in Brussels. Only later, when he was Chancellor—and Britain *had* withdrawn—did he begin to change.

The British having pulled out, Spaak (the Belgian Foreign Minister) produced his now famous report out of the work of the expert committees. It suggested that the proposed Common Market should take the form of a Customs Union, not a Free Trade Area. For a brief period following our withdrawal, British policy reacted to developments in Brussels with outright hostility. When coupled with the British refusal, the disappointment in Europe turned to resentment. The leader of the Belgian delegation, who was present at all the negotiations from Messina onwards, was sent by Spaak to London early in 1956: Jean Charles, Baron Snoy.

BARON SNOY: "I was sent in February 1956 to London to meet the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Macmillan. We had lunch together at the Belgian Embassy and I explained everything to him: what we had decided for the Report of the Heads of Delegation. His answer was: 'You have commenced a very fine undertaking; but for your Common Market, it will kill our trade and we have to fight against it.' It was a very major position, and I reported to Spaak that we had very little hope to get from that side."

THIS PERIOD of open British hostility to the work going on in Brussels lasted for two months or so. A probable reason why it was so shortlived—the firm and interested American support for integration—is contained in this recollection of the Under-Secretary of the Board of Trade who was Britain's representative at the negotiations until his recall and Britain's withdrawal at the end of 1955, Russell Bretherton.

BRETHERTON: "We made a very ill-judged and, in my view, unfortunate approach to the Americans, saying we think they are going to form a Customs Union—or not a Customs Union but something very protective and damaging—and won't you help us to stop it. To which we got an extremely dusty answer. Thorneycroft immediately after the breakdown in November was obviously very worried and certainly stirred up his colleagues in the Cabinet. I don't know exactly how he did it."

AND LORD THORNEYCROFT HIMSELF, who was then head of the Board of Trade and Bretherton's boss, looked up some of the records to reinforce his own memory of how he "stirred up" his colleagues, following our withdrawal.

LORD THORNEYCROFT: "Could I quote a bit of what I was saying to the Cabinet and my colleagues at that time?"

'All courses (I said) raise issues of complexity and considerable controversy. The most tempting course is to do nothing. If we can contrive a policy with Europe, however, to deal with the situation, we can justify it, expand it, and defend it. We shall be in a central position from which we can repulse attack. If, on the other hand, we just leave things to develop we run into grave dangers. In Europe we shall forfeit any claims to leadership. In the Commonwealth we may find ourselves at the end of the day clinging to the remnants of imperial preference. Nor can we hesitate for very long. Certain tactical moves are open to us but tactics depend on strategy and until we can agree upon our broad strategic concept generally, tactical arrangements may not only be ineffectual but could be really dangerous....'

And I then went on to argue the case for having a Free Trade Area in materials and manufactures, and special arrangements which could have been

made in agriculture. But of course they've been made on lines very different to those that *would* have been made had we participated. It was a very great mistake.

If we had gone in then, our position was strong, our reputation high. We were wanted by our friends and colleagues, perhaps not with the fervour of the Hague conference but still wanted very much. We could have played a great part in it, and the resultant community would have looked quite different, or very different to the one which exists today, and would be geared far more in British interests."

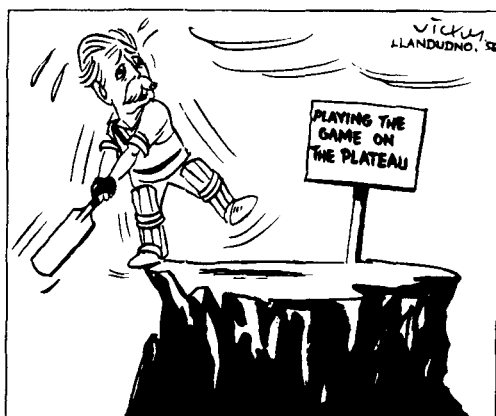
—So it was a diplomatic catastrophe, in retrospect?

THORNEYCROFT: "Yes, it was a diplomatic catastrophe from that point of view."

THORNEYCROFT'S WORDS to his Cabinet colleagues early in 1956 heralded the first stirrings of a new policy and a somewhat belated concentration upon Europe. It was not yet a move into Europe. That decision had been taken—and we were against it. But it would prove to be a last attempt by Britain to square the circle with the Continental Europeans and Britain's traditional interests in the Commonwealth by an alternative design for European cooperation. What was called Plan "G" would now emerge.

Britain would propose a Free Trade Area, in industrial goods only, between the Six intending to form a Common Market, treated as a whole, and Britain plus the rest of Europe—the Industrial Free Trade Area. Before we examine the conception and eventual failure of Plan "G" we should follow the Europeans one vital step further—to Venice, in May 1956. There the Foreign Ministers of the Six met to receive Spaak's Report and its recommendation that the Common Market should be in the form of a Customs Union. This was the time of decision of the National Governments as opposed to the delegations of experts which had been meeting under Spaak's chairmanship in Brussels. A qualified invitation, despite her withdrawal from Brussels, was extended to Britain to take part in the drafting of the Treaties if she accepted this Report. Britain did not do so, and did not go. The strategic decision had been made at the time of our withdrawal not to become committed. In his own memoirs Paul Henri Spaak recollected that his colleague Baron Snoy called this meeting in Venice the "miraculous" conference. Snoy once again was present as Belgium's Finance Minister.

BARON SNOY: "The Venice conference was a conference of one-hour-and-a-half where the utmost decisions were taken for the future of Europe. I



went to Venice, and Spaak had probably the same feeling as I had, that we would meet a tremendous French opposition to the Report of the Heads of Delegation, called 'Report Spaak.' It happened through good chance that the French had the Chair; so Pineau arrived, took the chair, and he started the conference by asking: Well, we have here a report of Mr Spaak—could Mr Spaak comment on that report?

Mr Spaak answered: My report has been in the hands of the governments and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for three weeks. I suppose everybody took the time to read it very clearly, and I have no comment to make.

So poor Pineau asked the members of the Conference: Would anybody comment on the 'Report Spaak'? Nobody asked for the floor. So Pineau said: Being Chairman I have to give the answer of the French government first. And he gave the advice that the French government was in favour of the 'Report Spaak', provided there would be a new chapter, written about colonial and overseas territories. . . .

I remember having said to Spaak: 'Now for God's sake, let nobody take the floor again.' And that was what happened. After an hour-and-a-half, everybody went out to the *laguna*, saying, We have only to make the communiqué. And I never expected such an important conference to go through with all the acceptances of all the decisions written in the 'Report Spaak'—provided we should find a solution for Algeria and the colonial and overseas territories, which was a difficult matter, I agree, but not insuperable."

IT WAS BECAUSE the British thought these difficulties *would* in the end prove insuperable, allied with France's long tradition of protectionism in trading, that it was considered in London that the French "would go no distance at all towards a Common Market." But the French were about to make a radical reappraisal and a shift in their policy.

It is important to remember what the situation of France was then. Economically, it was in all kinds of crisis, unable to accept foreign competition and with a protectionist tradition. In short the Common Market presented it with a major challenge and forced far-reaching internal changes in order to meet open competition with Germany. As a result of this, during the 1960s—the period of maximum dynamic growth within the Common Market—France emerged with a completely new economic infrastructure. From all this Britain had elected to stand aside.

The defeat and humiliation of France in Indo-China in 1954, and the growing insurrection in North Africa no doubt helped to concentrate the

French mind for this fundamental change. Whereas Britain's orderly transition from Empire to Commonwealth, and the dimension and nature of her overseas relationships, offered no strict analogy and imposed no similar sense of urgency.

But Lord Butler, who opposed the suggestion at the time, has said that the mistake Britain made was not to make her own move into Europe at this same period when the British trading position with her overseas Commonwealth was notably declining. By her withdrawal from the Messina invitation and the Brussels Committee Britain did not exploit the chance to make the fundamental new arrangements which, in the British absence, France set out to secure for herself.

As we have been told, at the last moment—the stage when the Common Market Treaties were being prepared, after the agreement reached by the Six in Venice in May 1956 to go ahead in principle—France suddenly raised the issue of her overseas territories as a condition of entry to a Common Market. The man who drafted the Treaty of Rome, steering its way through the shoals of Agriculture, of Customs Unions and Free Trade areas and Overseas possessions, was Jean Monnet's principal assistant, Pierre Uri.

URI: "France was giving up the preferences it enjoyed in its former Empire. If it had no special access to those markets, there was no reason why they should bear all the burden of all the financial aid."

—And as far as the British were concerned?

URI: "As far as the British were concerned, they weren't there any more. But *had* they been there—provided they had accepted the key idea: that is, we are really working together for a common project—I think they would have got the same deal as France did. Personally I regret the British haven't been in earlier because the European Community is too much bent on Africa and not enough on Asia. I know these are such enormous countries; India is such a big lump in the developing world. But I personally regret the certain lack of balance between Africa and Asia and the pre-occupation of the European Community; and this is probably due to the fact that the British hadn't been in from the start."

BUT, WITH BRITAIN STANDING BACK, the future Common Market would be an accommodation, reached with the Germans, principally over the essential interests of France.

Another who was closely involved throughout the period of Messina and the Rome Treaty has a personal recollection of how France resolved the issue of her *territoires d'outre-mer*, the overseas possessions, and combined it with her radical move

into an integrated European Community. The Director-General of Economic and Military affairs in the Dutch Foreign Office at the time, in 1956, was Ernst van der Beugel.

VAN DER BEUGEL: "What made the situation so difficult was that the Treaty was ready. And the French came up with the *territoires d'outre-mer* at the very, very, very last moment, which created a great shock to the others. I remember very well a Sunday on the Quai d'Orsay when—that was the first time the Prime Ministers were called in, for the thing was negotiated in the garden of the Quai d'Orsay, between Adenauer and Mollet—I still see them walking through the garden arm in arm. And the Germans paid; essentially the Germans paid the bill. But at the very, very last moment—the Treaty was ready—the French then said, the Treaty will not pass the Assembly if we don't bring in the *territoires d'outre-mer*, which was a very nasty way of negotiating what they knew six months in advance. They put the pressure on at the very last moment."

—Yes, which is the soul of the whole European idea really. The Germans were willing to pay almost any price. The British appear to have been convinced, until very late in the day, that Germany would not pay that price. Macmillan's "Memoirs" are quite extensive on this whole subject; but he says somewhere in his diary that "the Germans have sold out completely to the French", in a tone that seems rather offended and surprised. As late as 1957–58, the British appear to have been caught napping by Dr Adenauer's will and determination.

VAN DER BEUGEL: "With one marginal comment, that British foreign policy did very little to influence the Germans. There was a total absence of the notion that Germany was—or was going to be—the key country in Europe. British diplomacy was totally focused on France and neglected the Germans. But the analysis that Adenauer was in the pocket of the French—that analysis in itself is right."

THIS FACTOR WAS, and is, such a determinant in post-War Western Europe that it's hard to see whether it might have been otherwise. Ernst van der Beugel thinks there is an additional factor involved: a failure of British policy over Germany. Sir Con O'Neill, a distinguished Foreign Office official who served in Germany and later led Britain's negotiations at the time of our eventual entry to the Common Market, agrees.

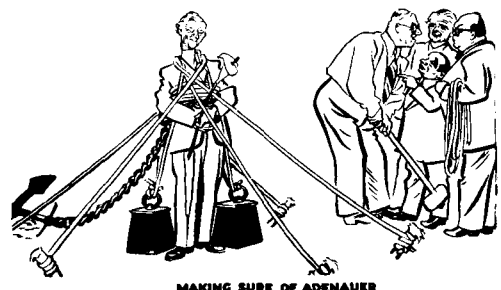
SIR CON O'NEILL: "I've always seen it as profoundly disappointing and one of our greatest mistakes—though perhaps we couldn't have avoided it—that we allowed our relations with Ger-

many to become so infinitely less important to Germany than are Germany's relations with France. Now I may have taken a superficial view—I probably did—but I was a little bit surprised that things went as they did. At the time I was in Germany, in Bonn, the first three-and-a-half years, 1949 to 1953, I thought our relations with the German government were increasingly good. But we didn't ever really appreciate how 'un-British' in his outlook, how unappreciative of the British, how hostile to the British, Adenauer really basically was from the start. And how, as a Western European, he didn't understand England. He didn't like England very much. He regarded us as some kind of maritime pirates, jolly good at swiping chunks of Africa and looking after our own interests, but not very reliable in a European context."

ONCE MORE one has recourse to Harold Macmillan's *Memoirs* for this vital period in the middle 1950s, as the Community is being formed. He says that the settlement by France and Germany of the protracted dispute over the Saar coal region should have been a clearer warning to British diplomacy that the reconciliation between them had gone much deeper than London supposed. Offered the choice of becoming part of Germany or France at a referendum in 1955, the inhabitants of the Saar opted for Germany. But what is significant is that France accepted this outcome so soon after the War. It was proof of the strength of the new ideas animating Europe. Therefore this episode should have diminished British expectations that the Germans, although historically "free traders", would support the new design about to be put forward by London as an alternative to the Common Market—the Free Trade Area.

Particularly as Dr Konrad Adenauer and his Foreign Minister Dr Hallstein made the political aspects of European integration paramount.

O'NEILL: "They welcomed it. They were prepared to go a very long way towards it. Adenauer in particular thought that this was the way of exorcising Germany's 'Prussian' complex, as you might



say, mastering the 'Eastern' tradition in German policy, and cultural attitudes and anchoring Germany firmly to the Christian, one must say, to the Catholic West. Hallstein probably shared those views. I think he was in a way less of an ideologue than Adenauer; but I don't think Hallstein thought very much of the British, I'm sorry to say. And he must have supported to the full Adenauer's increasingly firm view that the right thing was to anchor Germany's future in the closest possible relationship with France.

Now here—as on so many occasions—I was wrong in my appreciation, at an earlier stage. Because it was very conspicuous and undoubtedly the case back in 1950, '51, '52—the period we were negotiating these very complicated Bonn Conventions which put an end to the Occupation and were a kind of Peace Treaty—that it was the French who were fighting for every conceivable restriction, limitation, and humiliation on Germany; and we and the Americans who were fighting to lift, abolish, change, get rid of all this.

It made no difference. The Germans understood it—the Germans realised that the French had every conceivable ground for suspicion and hostility, in search of security. They realised they were in for a frightful row with the French over the Saar, which eventually was solved; from Germany's point of view, happily. It didn't fundamentally spoil their relationship with the French that the French tried to preserve all the privileges of Occupation. It didn't improve our relationship with the Germans that we were prepared, generously, to get rid of them—because Adenauer and Hallstein had concluded that Germany's future must lie, above all, with France."

THE CABINET having ruled out a move into Europe (and therefore unwilling to contemplate the disruption involved in joining a Common Market), Britain put forward the alternative of what it saw as a necessary compromise.

And so we come to Plan "G", the proposal for a Free Trade Area, in industrial goods only, between the Six forming the Common Market (treated as a single unit) and, outside it, Britain together with the rest of Europe.

The underlying motives for the Free Trade Area proposal remain to this day a matter of dispute—particularly in view of the outcome of it, which was not to unite Europe but to harden the division of it into two camps: the inner Six of the Common Market and the outer Seven, including Britain.

But the emergence of Plan "G" put an end to the official air of detachment which had characterised British policy at the time of the Schuman Plan, the Defence Community, and most recently with the decision not to go on with the Messina invitation to

take part in the Common Market. Britain was constantly invited during those various episodes to declare her position and say what she wanted; but she had always refused to do so if it meant accepting any obligation for the outcome, were that to lead to any more exclusive involvement in Europe.

Plan "G" showed that the new partnership between Macmillan at the Treasury and Thorneycroft at the Board of Trade—both of them pro-Europeans—was unwilling to leave all the running to the Common Market countries, and that the time had come in 1956—now almost posthumously late in the day—for Britain to put forward some comprehensive ideas of her own.

THORNEYCROFT: "We had some plusses because Harold Macmillan comes on to the scene and wants to do something. He is partial and he puts forward a series of alternative options which are then studied in Whitehall. Broadly speaking, the option that is adopted is the Free Trade Area scheme, and he tries to get in on that basis with the Europeans. Already the difficulties have mounted up on us. Before they were tentative, but now they have a system of their own which they've negotiated and agreed; and the result is it's far harder to get a new concept in."

—Essentially, this free trade proposal you put forward is a device for what? To get entry for our industrial goods into Europe as it's organised but without the quid pro quo of agricultural imports from France here?

THORNEYCROFT: "What I was saying from the Board of Trade, at that moment at any rate, was not that nothing should be done about agriculture, because something obviously would have to be done about agriculture. It was that special arrangements should be made about agriculture, which indeed they had been by the Europeans."

—But that was watered down in the final proposal, wasn't it?

THORNEYCROFT: "I think so, yes. Probably watered down because of the pressure from the Commonwealth Office and from agriculture—I mean, one was fighting against strong lobbies here at this time."

—Therefore, when we came to put this plan to the Europeans, we were offering France, as I see it, only this: increased industrial competition in Europe, but without any outlet for her agriculture.

THORNEYCROFT: "Yes. Mind you, we are an important market for France both in agriculture and in manufactures. We were not without cards in our hands even then, and we're still getting in a lot of agricultural produce from France."

—I just wonder whether the thing appeared to you to be

flawed from the beginning or whether you thought it had a genuine hope.

THORNEYCROFT: "I think it was all right as an opening position. I would have thought that in any serious discussion of it, we would have been forced into an agricultural debate fairly early. But even there, it is, after all, what we were forced into years later."

—And the point is you, at that time, would have gone the whole hog and made agriculture part of it? . . .

THORNEYCROFT: "Oh, we would have had to, absolutely. I mean, no doubt about it. We would have had to come to some arrangement. They would have been better than the ones we've got at the moment."

—Yes. Spaak says that he warned Macmillan at the time that this wasn't going to work, that if we thought this was. . . .

THORNEYCROFT: "Spaak was right. But it was probably all right, as I say, as an opening debating position. But they could have gone on. The Europeans would say: 'Well, this isn't perhaps quite going far enough, you've got to do something about agriculture'; and an agricultural solution could have been worked out. But remember that all the time we were still not absolutely in the clear with our Commonwealth partners; we had to carry them with us. So don't underestimate the difficulties of those concerned at that moment."

—But when would you say it was apparent to you that we had left it too late to write our terms of association with the new European Community?

THORNEYCROFT: "Well, I think that point occurred to me from the moment when we didn't participate in the original negotiation."

SUSPICIONS about the nature of British intentions apart, there were strong hints in 1956 that the Europeans no longer wanted to wait for Britain. And there was another major constraint upon British policy, the attitude of the Americans and their continued support for Continental integration.

At the beginning of 1956, just after Britain had pulled out of the efforts to form the Common Market and tried to enlist the Americans in putting a stop to it, the Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, and the new Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, visited Washington for a meeting with President Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. There they were told that the Americans considered Britain was being "ill-advisedly" hostile to developments in Europe.

This whole sequence from the British refusal of the Messina proposals to the putting forward of the alternative British design for Europe of the Free Trade Area is dismissed with scant mention in Anthony Eden's autobiography. Messina receives only a line or so; and of the visit to Eisenhower he says, simply,

"On Europe, we could not agree."

Significantly, Eden added this: "The Americans entertain the same enthusiasm for these new proposals about European integration as they did for the European Defence Community"—which suggests the Prime Minister believed the Common Market might suffer the same fate.

A diplomatic historian who has had a privileged access to the still-classified papers on both sides of the Atlantic affecting Anglo-American relations is Professor Richard Neustadt of Harvard.

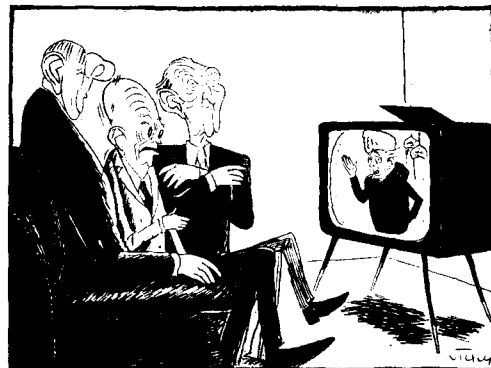
NEUSTADT: "I think it was very attractive to one strand of American opinion, with which I believe it's fair to associate President Eisenhower. To think that European integration was necessary and desirable for reasons of recovery, opposing the Russians, containing the Germans."

—But to include Britain too.

NEUSTADT: "To include Britain not merely as another government, but as the earnest of this European entity sustaining Allied relations with America and sustaining a global view. Britain was not merely to go in there, Britain was to go in there and dominate it on behalf of joint British-American concerns."

—What encouraged Eisenhower and Dulles in their belief that if Britain did take part in this integration move on the Continent it could order things to British and to American advantage?

NEUSTADT: "The American vision is that the British have an unparalleled Civil Service as well as a desirable world view; that—compared to the



French who are still recovering from the War, to the Germans who had collapsed—if the British would go into Europe and put their Civil Servants into Europe they would naturally, out of sheer competence, dominate the organisation.”

—Go in and run it?

NEUSTADT: “Go in and run it.”

AS FOR OFFICIAL American responses, specifically to the Free Trade Area design, this is the recollection of the US Ambassador in Paris at the time (and subsequently Eisenhower’s Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs), Douglas Dillon.

DILLON: “I don’t think we particularly objected to it as long as it did not impinge on the success of the Six, of the European Economic Community. Priority, I think, in our policy was to support the European Economic Community; and, if this thing could work in addition to it, so much the better. But I don’t think that we felt that it was really a very important change. We didn’t think that the significance of it was as great as maybe was put on it in the United Kingdom. But we were not opposed to it.”

BUT NEITHER WHEN the real test came did US policy strive officiously to keep alive the Free Trade Area scheme. Douglas Dillon’s answer suggests that it was seen as of, literally, peripheral importance. Therefore the American judgment was that Britain had, by then, a diminishing relevance in shaping the radical changes taking place on the Continent from her position outside it.

There was another, and ultimately overwhelmingly important strand of American thinking, because in the end it was triumphant. This was the close link between Jean Monnet and a handful of key figures in US policy-making circles. Foremost among them was George Ball, the American who next to Monnet himself was responsible for the eventual success of the European Economic Community and who would later become President Kennedy’s Under-Secretary of State. George Ball suggests the essential political reason why there was little American enthusiasm for Britain’s industrial Free Trade Area scheme or IEFTA.

BALL: “The Seven was a concept of a Free Trade Area which would be, in effect, prejudicial to the American position without offering any compensatory political strength to the nations involved; and this seemed to me, to us, to be exactly the thing we didn’t want. We didn’t want the nations to move

into arrangements which were discriminatory against American trade unless there were compensatory political advantages; and we saw no political advantages in this. Indeed we felt that all this was going to do was to complicate Britain’s ultimate relationships with the Continent, which indeed happened. I think the EFTA was a major tactical error from the British point of view.”

BUT THE UNIQUE PATTERN of long-established relationships enjoyed by Britain was still a powerful, if more and more a residual obstacle. In addition to which, it was tenaciously held in Whitehall that just because the Six had proclaimed an intention to go ahead with a Customs Union called the “Common Market”—and had made demonstrable progress towards that end—that didn’t mean that it would necessarily succeed. On the British side, “totally and centrally” concerned (to use his own words) in the later stages of the Free Trade Area negotiations, was the Under-Secretary of the Treasury, Sir Frank Figgures.

FIGGURES: “There were certain things which you could do and certain things which you could not do—certain things which were excluded by the then inarticulate major premises of political life. Now, there’s a very important point here; things in the event don’t turn out precisely as they are expected to. The Treaty of Rome in relation to the Messina concept is one of these. The concept of Messina was that there would be created a thoroughgoing Customs Union. Now the concept of a ‘Customs Union’ is clear. It is almost like one of those things which exists as an idea in the mind of God, except that when you come to implement it, it doesn’t look like that.”

—Can I press you on that? That’s what it became. But when it started that question was left quite deliberately open.

FIGGURES: “It was not *de facto* open. What was *de facto* open was the rigidity of the Customs Union. Now it is a fact that by the time the Treaty of Rome was negotiated and signed, no single case existed in which a member of the Community had to modify its tax or import structure with any territory with which it had previously had special associations. Now that’s going very far. But if you take them one by one, you will find not a single case. In other words, the Customs Union was far from complete.

Now, of course, if we had been told that that was the sort of structure which was going to emerge we would have been able to say: Well, that’s perfectly all right by us, there’s no trouble about that one—or at least, at any rate, the major objections to a Customs Union, which were put for example, very

powerfully in one speech in the House of Commons by Mr Maudling. He said (I'm not quoting, because I haven't got the text): I don't find it conceivable that the day would come when we would have to have a tariff on produce coming from Australia and not a tariff on similar produce coming from Western Germany.... As he said that I'm sure he was expressing something which was more than an inarticulate major premise of politics in those days.

Now, if we had seen that the sort of structure would enable us to maintain the totality of that system, so that we would have maintained imperial preferences, so that we would have maintained free entry for Commonwealth goods into this country, a major objection would have disappeared. But, of course, I'm sure you will appreciate that if we had said: Well, we'll come in on the same basis as you, and that's what it means, the Treaty couldn't have been negotiated. Because that would have meant that the whole of the temperate foodstuff imports from the British Commonwealth would have come into a member of the Community, free and for nothing. And that would have totally undermined all the concepts which were developed, both in the early stages and finally in the Treaty of Rome."

THERE, AS WHITEHALL SAW IT, was the dilemma for Britain restated—a dilemma which, even though it was one which might make the angels weep, was one for which the improvisations of existing policy were proving increasingly inadequate, if not yet exhausted.

1956 was not, however, remarkable in Britain for this confusing inchoate struggle over the political and economic future of Europe, but for a single event which had lasting reverberations—Britain's joint invasion with France and Israel of Suez. As Eden put it:

"What are we seeking to do? First and foremost, to stop the fighting, to separate the armies, and to make sure that there's no more fighting. We've stepped in because the United Nations couldn't do so in time."

The Suez affair led directly to Anthony Eden's resignation (after his breakdown), and his replace-

ment as Prime Minister, in January 1957, by Harold Macmillan who had more than shared in Eden's determination to take military action at the beginning. The abandonment of the Suez expedition at US insistence, and under the pressure of obloquy at home and abroad, forced a divisive debate and an important revision of Britain's own perceptions of itself as a nation able and willing to sustain a world role. It was that role which Eden had, in rejecting the European concept for Britain, resolved to uphold.

Some senior Foreign Office figures, like, for example, Roger Makins (Lord Sheffield) who had a large influence upon policy in the 1950s, maintain that Suez was almost the least among post-War crises. They point to the fact that, ironically, within two years the United States and Britain were acting, side by side this time, in another military intervention in the Mediterranean, the Lebanon in 1958.

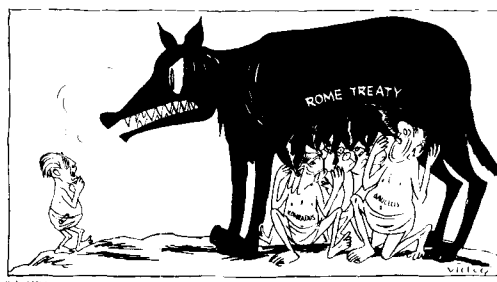
But the implications of Suez for the way Britain looked at Europe were more profound. The Americans and the Soviet Union had combined to stop the British and French from carrying out something they had jointly and sovereignly determined to do, in the Middle East. The rival philosophies of the USA and the USSR, professing anti-imperialism in common, had combined in their effect to make Britain's elected role as leader of a global commonwealth of nations less tenable.

The variety of considered reflections upon the role of the Suez episode in dictating a reappraisal of British policy more properly belongs to the period the next article will cover, when Macmillan undertook the basic reassessment which led to Britain's application to join the, by then, burgeoning Common Market. But Suez did one thing at once. It further diminished the plausibility of an independent world role for the United Kingdom. As one informed historian says:

"Suez presented the biggest challenge to Britain's leadership of the Commonwealth, since the American War of Independence."

The informed "insider" who wrote those words in a recent history of a major department of state, the Commonwealth Office, was its former Permanent Under-Secretary, Joe Garner. Lord Garner makes, in his own mind, the radical link for future British policy between Britain and Europe.

LORD GARNER: "It's the fashion, I know, in some quarters to say that Suez was a flash in the pan and didn't really matter very much. I think it was enormously significant and enormously symbolic. I think Suez, more than anything, punctured the Great Power illusion once and for all. We showed ourselves—and we showed the world, which was more important—that we could not operate on our own on this sort of scale. This was a great shock.



But we accepted it and we drew the implications. We took a little time to draw the full implications, no doubt, but I think never after 1956 did we make quite the same claims to operate as a Great Power in the world as a whole; and we realised that our status was different. That was point number one. Then there was the Messina Conference, and we thought that stood very poor chances of getting off the ground. But by the post-Suez era, it was clear that not only did the Common Market exist, it was enormously successful. It was prosperous; it was going ahead. The question, therefore, then faced us: What we were to do? And our first attempts, of course, were to try and form an association, without the full extent of the Customs Union. But eventually it became clear to us that no half-way house was possible, and we were faced with the alternative of Union or nothing.

IN VAIN, THEREFORE, did Britain argue throughout 1957 and 1958 that the Free Trade Area proposal was a desirable evolutionary process which, in increasing the prospects for European unity by accommodating the British dilemma, would end one day in the sort of result the Europeans were willing to embrace at once. Acceptance of the British idea would have meant delay in signing the Common Market treaty; and delay would, in the end, have increased the possibility that the British proposal would emerge on top. Spurred on by France now, which had made the radical reappraisal Britain had yet to make (giving up much of its traditional protection and entering open competition with Germany in the new community), the Europeans would not wait. At this stage, the consequences of Britain's earlier self-imposed withdrawal and exile from the Common Market negotiation at the end of 1955 become almost palpable. The belief in London that the Germans, in the person of the Economics minister, Professor Ludwig Erhard, with their traditional and his personal support for free-trade philosophies, would swing the arguments Britain's way proved to be misplaced.

It was a continuation of that consistent misjudgment by Britain of the political will on the Continent, and in this case of Dr Konrad Adenauer particularly, to achieve something that would rise above the sanguinary, humiliating past, something that would be expressed in new and intimate forms of political cooperation which alone would make it possible to rebuild European power and influence.

SIR CON O'NEILL: "We didn't realise in this country—I certainly didn't realise at the time, although I came to realise later—how deeply unpopular our own Free Trade Area effort was. It wasn't unpopular with the Germans—Erhard was

all in favour of our Free Trade Area efforts. But for a reason we didn't really appreciate. Erhard was in favour of it because he was afraid that we would skim the cream off trade with Scandinavia, Austria, and Switzerland. He didn't want discrimination to grow up against Germany. That's why he and the German government were all in favour of a Free Trade Area, not because they particularly wanted us in.

—We, presumably, undertook it in the belief that we could succeed. And I'd like to know why you think we thought we could succeed when we knew it was against American policy wishes. The Americans did not wish this to happen because it discriminated against their interests without the political result that they wanted of closer political unity in Europe. Now why did we think we could succeed in this strategy?

O'NEILL: "Well, we very nearly did succeed! I think we would have succeeded in creating that Free Trade Area, but for the French opposition. Because German support was more or less enough, nearly enough, to neutralise French opposition. And if you remember, the negotiations were broken off, not by a common decision of the Six that they wouldn't take part any longer, but in a manner which became rather familiar on a couple of occasions later—by a unilateral decision by the French that they wouldn't play any longer.

—But then General de Gaulle goes and sees Dr Adenauer and gets his agreement to kill the negotiations, doesn't he? Why does Adenauer support him over (one assumes) against the advice of Erhard?

O'NEILL: "Well, in the end, I agree, Adenauer did support him, perhaps, probably, over the advice of Erhard. It was a very crucial moment. If you recollect, this was the moment when Adenauer was getting very, very old, when ideas were in the wind for the Franco-German bilateral arrangement which grew up later, and Erhard was overruled. But it wasn't a hopeless enterprise. It did very, very nearly come off."

DURING THE CRITICAL TIME in which France was taking the plunge into the Common Market, the political situation in France itself, because of the colonial war in Algeria, was growing more precarious. And that was another reason why the architects of the Common Market were determined to make haste and not wait for Britain, while they had a pro-European in Guy Mollet at the head of affairs in France.

On 1 January 1958, the Treaty of Rome, establishing the Common Market, came into effect.

In the ensuing months, France advanced to the brink of civil war. As the direct result of a military

coup in Algiers, by June of 1958 General de Gaulle, after more than a decade in the political wilderness, once more assumed his long deferred responsibilities for the destiny of France.

The last months of 1958 saw the decline and fall of the Free Trade Area proposal which was Britain's last attempt to sidestep the Common Market. It was the failure, not just of a single scheme, but the end of the road for a whole strategy pursued from the earliest post-War years: of "association" without "full involvement." It came to grief in a volcanic eruption in the forum of the OEEC, the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation, in December 1958. Sir David Eccles, who had replaced Lord Thorneycroft at the Board of Trade, was the British delegate when months of mistrust and suppressed irritation between Britain and France suddenly flared up. The Belgian, Baron Snoy, was present, as Chairman of the Council of OEEC.

BARON SNOY: You made some mistakes, and I always criticise Eccles for the way he handled the OEEC meeting where it was possible to renew the negotiation. Instead of that, Eccles had a very arrogant attitude, which was of course accepted by the French who take, on their side, a very arrogant attitude. And we had a very disastrous meeting of the Council of OEEC.

—What was the nature of Eccles' arrogance, and why were we impatient?

BARON SNOY: "You were impatient because the French, of course, had taken a position which was incompatible with the idea of a Free Trade Area. The idea of 'renewing contacts' with the European Commission in the Six was that you had to start again a discussion about what was the definition of a Free Trade Area and what kind of result it would have. And Eccles immediately took a point—I don't remember his words—but everything was broken after he had spoken."

THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN PARIS at the time

was one of the Foreign Office's most distinguished luminaries in the policy field for over two decades, Gladwyn Jebb. Lord Gladwyn adds this personal anecdote about the last rites of the Free Trade Area proposal and the row which finally buried it.

LORD GLADWYN: "The French really made it quite clear that they weren't to have anything to do with it, in spite of having led us to believe they would have some kind of solution. They then suddenly pulled themselves together and said they wouldn't. Then there was a frightful row and Eccles had pleaded the cause very eloquently and rather indignantly. And he had, more or less, a stand-up row with Couve de Murville."

—Can you remember the row?

GLADWYN: "I wasn't there. No, I wasn't there, but I came in afterwards. There was a reception at the Quai d'Orsay for the British delegation to which I was invited. Eccles had just come in. Couve was in a state of great emotion, quivering with emotion, and he looked exactly like a sort of cat who'd been brutally assaulted by a bulldog and who had just gone on quivering. Obviously, you know, it was a dreadful scene really. Not that he said anything impolite or anything like that, but it was purely the atmosphere which was exactly like that.

I think that Eccles thought that the French had more or less indicated they would agree to some kind of solution, I think probably, and then it was rather a shock to him, not unnaturally, when they just said, No, they wouldn't. That meant the end, the final end of all the efforts of himself and Maudling."

—You've said that, in a flash, it was only then that we recognised what perhaps we should have recognised many years earlier.

GLADWYN: "I think that's true, yes. I think we should have—several years before . . ."



—That Europe was being organised, not just without us. . . .

GLADWYN: "No, but potentially against us, yes."

ALGIERS IMPINGES on this story of Britain and Europe in an oddly disconnected but interesting way. Events there, in 1958, had been the cause of the return to power in France of the single figure who would now come to fill Britain's European universe for the decade to come, General de Gaulle. Long years before, in the 1940s, before the outcome of World War II had determined Europe's immediate future, Harold Macmillan had been in Algiers too, rubbing shoulders with the French, when he was installed (as it was said) as "Viceroy of the Mediterranean" by Churchill.

Then it had been Britain's finest and France's darkest hour. This time in 1958 while Macmillan and de Gaulle were each at the head of affairs of proud nation-states, the fortunes of war were about to be reversed. France had ended the decade of the 1950s with a clear calculation and a new purpose. It was firmly dismissive of any further compromise with British attempts to have it both ways. And often that voice of France spoke through someone else who had been in Algiers in the Wartime years, and who was now de Gaulle's Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville.

COUVE DE MURVILLE: "We believed that the good direction was the Common Market and not the Free Trade Area. I would say, philosophically, because the Common Market was more in our tradition than Free Trade. France has never been a free trade country, and it believes more in organisation. The Common Market was not only free trade for industrial production but also a future agriculture common policy; and that's a thing to which we were very much attached, for the reason simply that agricultural production is important in our country. So we could not accept the British idea. We accepted the Common Market, and inevitably a sort of conflict was to appear between

Britain and the Common Market countries."

—Macmillan seems to have placed a lot of reliance on Ludwig Erhard's view prevailing. Why do you think he was wrong?

COUVE DE MURVILLE: "He was wrong to rely too much on Erhard simply because the Germans, when it came to a real decision, were bound by the fact that they had signed the Rome Treaty. They were bound to stick with their partners. They couldn't go their own way against the others."

—But did you regard it as a rather balanced situation at this time, or did you see Macmillan's proposal as a rather desperate move by the British to. . . .

COUVE DE MURVILLE: "I would rather qualify it as a desperate move in order to prevent the entry into force of the Rome Treaty. I mean it was the last, the last effort to avoid what they considered and which was in fact—at least temporarily—the break between Britain and the Continent."

THROUGHOUT THE 1950s, Britain had been overwhelmed by her own outdated vision of Europe. The inheritance of a set of ancestral ideas led to a pervasive scepticism of what Europe was capable of achieving.

Jean Monnet's prophecy that the British would, in the end, make the fundamental change required only when they saw that the new Community was working, was about to be fulfilled.

The Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, would now undertake that fundamental reappraisal and reversal of traditional policy, and seek in doing so to change a whole national attitude of mind with his decision to apply for full membership of the European Community. Why and how he got the agreement of Cabinet and Commonwealth, of Party and Parliament, and the great Departments of State in Whitehall to do so is the subject, as based on my broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, of the third and concluding enquiry, "The Channel Crossing."



Ruth Silcock

Mrs Carmichael: Ward H5

One day, when working in
a psychiatric
hospital ("bin"
the doctors said), I went
to find an old lady: sent
along brick corridors, up stone stairs,

to a stout wooden door
with two brass door knobs:
double knobs for
a puzzle, sufficient
to sort out staff from patient:
staff have steady hands, unclouded heads.

The ward was huge and high:
enormous windows
showed brilliant sky.
Some fields were far below:
football pitch, cabbages. No
voices, barking dogs, disturbed the ward

where, safe in every chair,
sat an old lady
penned, pinned in there
by rugs, trays, knitting, sleep.
Some smiled, nodded, wept. To keep
rules of courtesy, I smiled, nodded,

did not weep, looked for the
Ward Sister's office,
a snug room. She
was busy writing, glad
for company, quickly had
tea and toast brought for us. We chatted.

"Come and see my ward", said
the Sister, proudly,
took my hand, led
me, showed me everywhere,
sluice, kitchen, bathroom, and there
in a mist, a thick steam, old women

stood together, pink skin
glowing, white hair wet;
rosy, dressed in
towels, slippers; a cloud
from showers about them. Bowed
from baths, they clambered, sat on stools, dripped.

"Mrs Carmichael", said
my guide, the Sister.
Naked, wet, red,
Mrs Carmichael came,
shook hands, agreed to her name,
discussed her prospects, her finances.

The interview over,
we left the bathroom,
its steam cover.
Entered the ward. Among
ladies, one stuck out her tongue
like a lollipop; one whinnied, waved.

J. C. Hall

Playback

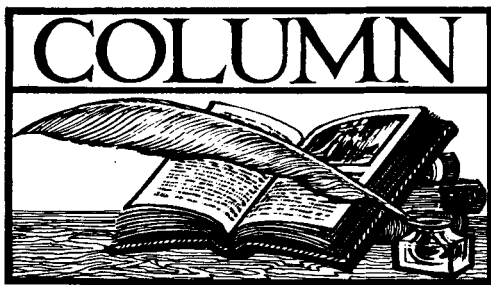
I slip the *Fifth* from its case.
I thread the tape and press
And the spools begin to race.
Stand by for those famous chords!
Nothing. Then a click, and your voice,
Your faint hesitant words.

O sudden time-tempted one,
Here on the other track,
Uncatalogued, plagued by hum,
You grope for my heart across
Ten years or more. I'm back
In that room, just as it was,

The tea things pushed aside,
You with your hat still on,
Your bag of crocodile hide,
And me not patient enough
As you lean to the microphone
Your frail grey head, and cough.

"Speak up, speak up" I implore.
A car hoots, a telephone rings
And nobody answers, a door
Slams—a chance overlay
Of unerasable things.
I strain to catch what you say.

Dear ghost, you were never bold,
Yet how hauntingly threaded through
The years I have aged from you
These few shy words. I forgive
All the noise of the world
This moment, to hear you live.



ON A SUNNY MORNING in Rome, a German friend of mine was sitting in the Piazza Navona enjoying a cool beer. Up to the café table came a huge, muzzled Alsatian dog, with a well-dressed middle-aged man in tow. My friend fondled the dog. The man spoke. "*Verzeihen Sie, aber sind Sie Deutscher?*" On being told he'd guessed right, the stranger launched into a torrent of abuse against the Italians—idle, thieving devils, preying on the tourists, living by their wits, their climate, and their spurious charm. My friend protested. "*Ach, you wait! Let me tell you what's happened to me.*"

The stranger, it appeared, owned a restaurant somewhere in Bavaria—"just a village, you've probably never heard of it." After years of hard work without a holiday, he'd come to Italy with his wife. They hated driving, so they'd travelled by train with Fritzl, the dog. And on their first night in Rome—disaster. In one of the narrow streets near the Pantheon, a youth on a Vespa had ridden past them, very close, very fast. The stranger's wife had been carrying their valuables in a leather shoulder bag. As the youth rode past, he'd slashed the shoulder strap and roared away with all their precious possessions—money, travellers' cheques, tickets, passport: the lot.

So there they were, stranded in a foreign city, far from home. All they could think of was to get to the German Consulate as soon as it opened next day. They'd felt too sick to eat dinner or breakfast—although Fritzl was ravenous; in any case, they were afraid to run up a bill at the hotel. Thank goodness, the Consul was sympathetic. Yes, they could have a loan to pay the hotel bill and buy the cheapest rail tickets home. What a relief! But—just a moment: what about the dog? Desolation. The Consul was very sorry, but the rules were strict: he could provide money only for the man and his wife. So what were they to do? They couldn't abandon Fritzl; and they couldn't smuggle him, either—he was far too big. The wretched Italians wouldn't help. And anyway, they were never coming back to this God-forsaken country. Never. "But I'm sorry. Please excuse my outburst. It's just that, being a compatriot, I'm sure you realise how I feel."

My friend nodded. "But look—can't I lend you some money for the dog's fare home?" "You? My dear sir!" The stranger was overwhelmed. He

produced his card. "Here's my address: could I have yours? I'll send you a money order as soon as I get back." Thirty thousand lire changed hands. "I hope you'll forgive me, but I must tell my wife at once. She'll be overjoyed." With a final handshake, the stranger left the piazza, a spring in his step, the dog tugging him away.

Then my friend looked at the stranger's card. "*Restaurant Mimosa*" or some such: "*Picturesque Surroundings, Local and International Dishes, Fine Wines and Beers.*" Proprietor: *Dott.* So-and-so. Come again? *Dott.*? An Italian abbreviation on a German business card? My friend began to put *zwei* and *due* together. Back at his hotel, he called the German Consulate. They jumped. "Where is he? Is he still with you? Can you trace him? We've been after him for months." The whole tale, Fritzl and all, had been a classic con.

The point of this story isn't to give Germans a bad name. The Roman sting artist, after all, was possibly Italian. No: what's worth noticing is the way that tricksters trade on national stereotypes—aggrieved upright Northerners beset by devious Latins. "Vee Briddish must stig togezzer"—a line I've actually heard in a press-club bar—is only an implausible version of the same chauvinist appeal. And if even mild xenophobia, like greed, makes people gullible, this may be poetic justice.

MANY YEARS AGO, when I first lived in Italy, I shared the Northern tendency to gird up the loins, alert for aggression, pickpockets, sexual challenge, an extra digit on the bill. The streets seemed raucous and noisy, the traffic anarchic, the girls provocative, the boys both menacing and slightly soft. I'd have been a sucker for a tale of woe from some plausible compatriot—except that this "Latin" stereotype had immense exotic appeal. Noisy, yes: but how uninhibited. Anarchic? But what brilliant driving, what split-second reactions. And the people: "provocative", "menacing", "soft"? Only because everyone was so splendidly *there*, living in the present, physically integrated, alive, aware, unselfconsciously Lawrentian. D. H. Lawrence, in fact, was the Northern puritan who'd said it all, long ago, several times over, and with just the right blend of ardour and pique. But that didn't stop us saying it again, and feeling it very deeply.

The Italians, we felt, had so much to teach us. How to lose one's temper, for instance, bursting out in a loud, brief *sfogo* like a summer thunderstorm, clearing the air. We Northerners nursed our grievances, smouldered and grumbled, made everybody miserable because we were so repressed. How much better, we thought, to have things out, explosively—operatically. Lovers' reconciliations could be passionate too.

Physical immediacy—that was another lesson.

Northern men seldom touched each other, were stiff and awkward with children and women. They walked jerkily, and when they sat down they tied themselves in knots: knees crossed, legs intertwined, arms protectively folded, body contorted as if trying to disappear. Italians linked arms and even held hands; they showed affection in public, and were not afraid to weep. Both sexes walked proudly, gracefully, loose-limbed. In repose, they were relaxed but alert, like panthers. They felt at home in their skins.

Beyond that impression lay another, less cheering but equally to the point. The backdrop to Italian liveliness seemed to be a sense of tragedy. Poverty made illness a neighbour, death a familiar: the Church was an omnipresent reminder of metaphysics. The finest Italian writers—Leopardi, Pavese—were deeply aware of the transience of life. Northerners, cocooned by comfort, seemed secular and shallow, like “Ida” in Graham Greene’s *Brighton Rock*. They hid the plumbing behind the walls, and forgot the earth beneath the pavement. Middle-aged English faces, in particular, looked pink and innocent. Their Italian counterparts had haunted, grey-girt eyes that had seen it all. In the land of Machiavelli, John Stuart Mill and Jefferson seemed almost naive.

SEX AND TRAVEL-SNOBBERY played their part in the comparison. Young refugees from a still puritan society were agog at undulating haunches. The warm, worn stones of Rome or Venice put visitors in touch, literally, with a broader world, a deeper past. As intent on their ideal as Lawrence or Rousseau, they ignored any signals that belied it: complex social rituals, floridly abstract language, constricting family ties, male chauvinism, female prudery, neurotic religiosity, defiant atheism, embittered alienation, showmanship, ebullient vulgarity—all the traits admitted by such merciless, disabused *ciceroni* as Luigi Barzini. And, Barzini notwithstanding, a generation of Northerners, for the most part Anglo-Saxon, brought back a picture of Italy compounded of Shelley, Browning, Norman Douglas, D. H. Lawrence, and Herbert Kubly—a Great Good Place on which to project our dreams.

Meanwhile, the tourists brought back trophies. *Fiaschi* of wine were turned into lamp-bases; multi-coloured umbrellas braved Northern winters; scampi, pasta, and grated parmesan spread far and wide from London N.W.1. Espresso bars marked an epoch of anodyne teenage rebellion; and, long before Chinese takeaways, Italianate restaurants had swept all before them, swamping saltimbocca with soggy cabbage, and re-enacting *Cavalleria Rusticana* with warbling waiters in supposedly national costume. It all helped to publicise the

stereotype. When spaghetti Westerns reached the art houses, Italophile wisecracks were on hand to praise the deep, warm, human, lovable, essentially Latin approach of their directors, most of whom were masquerading under “American” names.

Propagated thus, the Lawrentian image has surely had some impact. Two decades ago, in the Kennedy era, there was much troubled talk about “the Americanisation of Europe”—supermarkets, super-highways, ferro-concrete, fast food. Since violence first hit the inner cities, a French friend (of East European extraction) has taken to deploring Europe’s “Latin-Americanisation.” If he lived in London, he might have noticed the “Italianisation” of Britain.

The quotation marks are deliberate. Bits and pieces of Italiana have certainly come to Britain: clothes, leatherwork, crockery, car designs, food, garden ornaments, and the odd expression like “*Ciao*.” But what’s under way is not the real adoption of an alien culture or the creation of New York-style Little Italies in Soho, Bedfordshire, and elsewhere. Much more, it’s a process of rejection—looking abroad for alternative models and turning away from what was thought of as Northern, puritan, square, uptight, and uncool.

“Take them Brummagem gloves off!” sergeant-majors used to yell at conscripts who had their hands in their pockets. Birmingham gloves were a common sight in Britain then—so much so, that I was surprised not to see them in Italy. Was it the heat? Whatever the reason, Italians let their hands swing freely; and what’s remarkable now is how many British people do the same, sauntering like Romans and gesticulating like Neapolitans. With conscription long gone, so is military stiffness. Shoulders roll, and are often rounded: legs go gangling along, and feet scuff—often in sneakers or “training shoes.”

DRESS, IN FACT, has become personal affirmation. Some young Italians used to seem narcissistic: what slaves behind the scenes pressed their sharp suits and scrubbed their spotless collars? Wasn’t it unmanly to pay so much attention to clothes? Not any longer. Male peacocks have long since appeared in Britain: and so has an opposite “Italian” trait. In the past, to Northern eyes, other Italians seemed to have come out in their underwear. Today, emblazoned with slogans, sweatshirts make sandwich-men of us all. “Let it all hang out” is more than a motto for liberated ladies. Up-market or down-market, “casualness” is the universal aim.

It extends, moreover, into social relations and into work. Understandably prizing direct human contact in a world increasingly bureaucratised, people grow impatient of formality. This is fine, so long as everyone fulfils his obligations; but as soon

as discipline or sanctions have to be imposed, the absence of a formal code makes for awkwardness and hostility. This, I suspect, is one reason why women used to find it hard to work together without emotional upsets: habitually, they lacked a formal, role-playing drill. For both men and women, the upshot may be loss of temper: but whereas in Italy a spontaneous Lawrentian *sfogo* might (but not necessarily) pass like a summer storm, such an outburst in Britain is still rare enough to leave a trail of pain. Middle-aged bosses or clients rail at the sloppiness of the young: younger people, accustomed to apparent matiness, resent the nit-picking *volte-face*. Both might benefit from the Italian recommendation of clear rules: *patti chiari, amicizia lunga*.

There are dangers, then, in adopting only part of a cultural package: casualness without subtle social codes, physical spontaneity without deep-rooted conventions—even, perhaps, the vulnerability of Christian ethics without the sanction and authority of Christian belief.

MEANWHILE, THE ITALIANS go their own sweet way. In Italy at the time of the “P2” Masonic-lodge row and the attendant Government crisis, I couldn’t help feeling that I was seeing the film round again. Another lurid upheaval like the Montesi scandal or the Sifar affair; more newspaper rumours about seismic revelations to come; more dapper middle-aged men with sagging, shifty faces; more guilt-by-association; another Cabinet’s collapse; a further sense that politics, for many Italians, was a remote and often shady puppet-show which they could neither control nor fully understand. But there—wasn’t I falling for yet another national stereotype? Considering Britain in the wake of the summer’s urban riots, it was hard to feel that Westminster and Whitehall had done much better. Were the youngsters throwing petrol bombs in London and Liverpool a British counterpart of Italy’s Front Line and Red Brigades? Would the “Italianisation” of Britain include the death of a British Aldo Moro?

Perhaps Claire Sterling (ENCOUNTER, July) has clues to the answer? Terrorist organisations, it’s clear, have international links—although the CIA’s published report on them soft-pedals the IRA. Some extremist groups have tried to be active in the trouble-spots: but for the present they look like surf-riders, seeking perverse glory—and getting excessive blame—for the sheer force of the breakers. Urban blight, unemployment, parental laxness, school indiscipline, hooligan sub-cultures, the example of television, and the absence of proper outlets for youthful aggression—all these seem enough to explain the violence without precipitately accusing either police tactics or some global con-

spiracy. Nevertheless, there are uncomfortable parallels between Italy and Britain which are worth bearing in mind.

Both are countries with ancient traditions that have recently been challenged by rapid change. Both have undergone a “revolution of rising expectations.” Both are in the grip of intractable recession. Each has a student population whose studies are no guarantee of jobs. Each has a sizeable “black economy” of work rewarded in cash or kind with no questions asked, no taxes paid. Each, moreover, is suffering from political frustration.

In Britain, facing a doctrinaire Government on the Right and an extremist Opposition on the Left, an ordinary voter may well feel baffled. He may not care for Margaret Thatcher and “monetarism”: but dare he vote for Michael Foot, unilateral disarmament, withdrawal from Europe, the weakening of NATO, a single-chamber Parliament, the abolition of private schools, and the politics of a trade-union-dominated Tammany Hall? The SDP-Liberal alliance may provide an alternative; but even if it succeeds nationally as well as in by-elections, there still remains a sting in the tail. The price for partial victory by the SDP and the Liberals might be further “Italianisation.”

Why? Look at the dilemma of an Italian voter. For thirty-five years, Italy’s been ruled by mainly Christian-Democrat coalitions; and although Giovanni Spadolini is Republican, the coalition he formed in June was still predominantly Christian-Democrat. Hitherto, any real alternative has been ruled out because the Italian Communist Party has taken so many votes from the democratic Left. So, for a whole generation, the Government’s political colour has not been determined directly by the electors, but by the politicians in the light of the results, cobbling a coalition together behind closed doors. Essentially, it’s been democracy without “Brand X.” No wonder some protestors have run riot.

Italy’s Left-wing critics used to denounce the “*legge truffa*”, the electoral law which favoured the ruling majority. They would have been horrified by Britain’s still more unfair “first-past-the-post” system, which once—in 1951—actually brought to power the party that was beaten in the overall poll. This system the SDP and Liberals very reasonably propose to change. But if they do win office, and if they can establish proportional representation, they must be careful not to saddle Britain with perpetual coalitions, and democracy without Brand X. Would it be dangerous, then, to vote for them? No. Paradoxically, the safest course of all would be to give the SDP-Liberal alliance a clear majority and make it the real alternative Government, rather than a casting vote in behind-the-scenes haggling. Smoke-filled rooms can lead to smoke-filled streets.

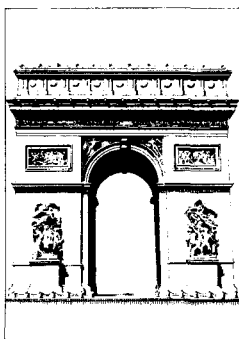
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NOTES & TOPICS

Letter from Paris

Old Promises, & New Ideas

By Raymond Aron



PERHAPS the desire for change had been bound to prevail in any case, putting François Mitterrand into the Elysée and a socialist majority into the Palais-Bourbon. Perhaps 52% of voters had made an early choice and condemned the outgoing President in advance. Yet it is worth recalling a

number of facts which transformed a possibly inevitable defeat into a disaster.

As President of the Republic for seven years of an economic “*nouvelle donne*”, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing needed the undiminished support of the majority which had elected him by a few hundred thousand votes in 1974. The campaign of violent personal attacks which was conducted by Jacques Chirac did not enhance the position of a President who was sapped by the exercise of power, and could not renew his old promise of “*changement*”—a promise which apparently takes the place of thinking for the voters and the parliamentary representatives of France. Simultaneously, while the previous majority was making a public exhibition of its own divisions, the discomfiture of the Communist Party restored a fictitious but ostensible unity to the French Left. After losing a quarter of its voters in the first round, the *PCF*, which had threatened the Socialists with withholding its support should it fail to score high enough in the polls, tendered its overnight surrender. It did not creep back into its bunker, as many expert “Communologists” had expected; instead it first of all ensured the election of François Mitterrand, then underwrote the triumph of the Socialists.

That left the former majority with one more blunder to commit, and not a very honourable blunder at that. Forty-eight hours after the defeat

of 10 May, the *UDF* parliamentary group agreed with its Right-wing allies to nominate and support only a single candidate in each constituency—a tactic decried by every analyst of our two-round electoral ups-and-downs. Giscard d’Estaing had not stood by the record of his seven-year term, and Raymond Barre had taken a vow of silence. The debate about the “Manifesto” or the “Socialist Plan”, which ought to have fuelled the campaign of the outgoing candidate, broke out during the parliamentary elections in the form of dire warnings. But too late to impress the French people, who as collaborators, legitimists, or monarchists, flock to the flag of victory (or, if you prefer it, obey a certain national logic).

In 1958 the new majority issued the slogan “*Sortez les sortants*”—“Out with the old brigade.” In 1962 the *UNR*, the Gaullist party, won a victory as conclusive as the Socialists did in 1981. The *UNR* had been elected in 1958 in the name of “*Algérie française*.” The French electorate duly rewarded it for betraying their own ideas for the sake of loyal obedience to General de Gaulle. This year’s losers may find a certain amount of consolation and hope in these scenes from the history of the Fifth Republic and the fickle tradition of the French electorate. The same voters who elected an *RPR-UDF* majority in 1978 have given the Socialists an absolute majority in 1981.

THE VICTORY of the Socialist Party over the Communists should not be taken to represent a mere accident, even allowing for the tactical errors committed by the top brass in the Place du Colonel-Fabien. In a country running at such a level of prosperity, with about 84% of its working population wage or salary earners, the relative weakness of the Socialist Party compared with the strength of the *PCF* had a look of anachronism. After his defeat in 1978, François Mitterrand was on the point of despairing about his prospects of ever reaching the promised land. Michel Rocard embarked on his own crusade against what he called “*archéosocialisme*”, and on behalf of a renovated modern version. Then came two providential surprises: on 27 April Chirac called for a “new man” (hence for getting rid of Giscard d’Estaing), and 25% of Communist voters switched to the Left’s candidate in the first round.

“Archaeosocialism” has not prevented the victory of the First Secretary of the Socialist Party, or the triumph of the Party itself. Are the Socialists of today, then, to be compared to the Bourbons—restored to power having learned nothing and forgotten nothing? As in 1936, the Socialist Party has announced a cut in the working week with no corresponding reduction in wages, in other words a higher hourly wage-rate. As in 1936, it is banking

on increasing the buying power of the masses in order to revive the economy. And certainly there should be a certain amount of growth as a result of the measures envisaged, particularly because in the spring of 1981 the economy was at the bottom of a down-swing. What remains uncertain, to say the least, is the ability of the Socialists, once in power, to keep their promises without accelerating inflation and aggravating the balance-of-payments deficit, not to mention jeopardising the currency.

As a technique of management, the Socialist programme as it is likely to be applied in practice does not, in the short term, herald either an apocalyptic catastrophe or the dawn of a new revival. In the space of a year or eighteen months from now (depending on the tempo of its own generosity), the government will have to resort to "Barrism", and perhaps even to a variety more genuinely austere than the sorry Barrism of Raymond Barre himself. But the real question does not hinge on the policy for recovery, whose probable ill effects can be repaired in a few years.

François Mitterrand, as I understand him,

believes in a socialism halfway between Sovietism and Social Democracy. So he will incline towards traditional reform policies—nationalisation, alterations in the tax structure, transformations of businesses, elected regional assemblies—most of which are hard to undo, and which taken as a whole would carry our society towards a kind of régime that the people of France are bound to dislike, and which will wreck our chances of staying in the group of the world's leading nations. To put the matter briefly, the question is not one of systematic opposition, or of rallying to the new power; a new battle of ideas begins, and must begin.

The former majority, which lost everything because of its quarrels and its pseudo-reconciliations, has to absorb the example of the losing sides in 1962 and 1968. Now that it is incapable of preventing the "socialist experiment", it must criticise that experiment in the name of its own ideas, and not just for everyday political reasons. The time of the *sociétés de pensée* has come again.

London Commentary

Panic, Populism, & Hard Times

By Edward Pearce



THE resistible rise of Anthony Wedgwood Benn began as a joke and is turning into a phenomenon. Tony Benn (as he likes to be called) has taken advantage of the new method of electing a leader of the Labour Party with almost improper celerity. With the essential power now shifted from the Parliamentary Labour Party to a combination of the unions and the local activists, it was inconceivable that there would not be a leftward slew, but when, at 3 a.m. during an all-night House of Commons debate, Mr Benn in person distributed to the Lobby his decision to contest the deputy leadership there was as much ridicule as there was anger.

Much of that anger came from the old hard core of Sovietniks who influence, without owning, the Left-wing *Tribune* faction within the Labour Party. They had not laboured so long to twist power out of the broken fingers of the PLP and set up a

species of "Leading Role of the Party" to have it turned so crudely and so soon to the promotion of the young god. Mr Benn is not vastly popular with the old Leninists. Too erratic, too self-concerned, too individualistic, he is nevertheless the best boxer they have got. And, muttering a little, they are in his corner, holding his towel. His views (which proceed by way of eclecticism, casual reading of history, an enchantment with the working class which would be charming in a nicer man, and a talent for tangents) are not theirs precisely, but he does come in useful.

The expectation had been that since the Left had won effective power in the Labour Party, and could name its policies and write its manifesto, it would wish to keep up temperate middling appearances, content to be led by any of the soft, amenable men able to provide decorous continuity in the public eye. But Benn has never been a mere front for anybody, and he has a memorable track-record as a rearranger of rules which have not suited him.

He was the uncontroversial advocate of high-technology-and-not-too-much-politics who, in 1962, single-handedly initiated the right of Peers to renounce their titles. (As the second Viscount

Stansgate he would have been doomed to subordinate office.) He brought about the first British referendum ever (on the EEC), and the very instrument of the present revolution—the abolition of tenure for MPs and the vesting of manifesto-writing and leader-selection in “the Party”—was more Mr Benn’s crusade than anybody else’s. He is a man of un-English energy, fervour and singularity of purpose. And he is very near to winning.

When that early morning announcement came, most people were amused. The overthrow of Denis Healey, former Chancellor of the Exchequer and beyond any question the best mind in the Labour Party, from his present second-best job as deputy leader seemed unthinkable even under the new rules. Not the least of the reasons for such a view was the unstated fear that Healey, who has considerable reserves of contempt for the company the Labour Party is getting into, would simply get up and walk away—that he might even go to the new Social Democrat Party, and, as our soccer crowds say of their heroes, he would “never walk alone.”

Of course, it is not merely the deputy leadership which has brought out the broken bottles. Michael Foot, at 67, is an accidental leader, cursed with physical accident, faltering and missing fire in the House of Commons. Most recently in a disastrous debate on unemployment, he spoke like an aged patter-comic ad-libbing in front of the curtain with a family death in the dressing-room.

WHETHER UNDER THE NEW RULES can win the second job will win the real one. And in every public-opinion poll Labour voters and the general public have been hardly a point apart from each other in preferring Mr Healey to Mr Benn, by a margin of about two-to-one. (Perhaps that is why the concentration of power into the exclusive caucuses of activists and union conferences has been brought about by a movement called The Campaign for Labour Democracy.) But it would be idle to suppose that this will not change if Mr Benn becomes the official leader—something which on my calculation he is scheduled to do between now and the last term of this Parliament, which falls fortuitously in 1984. The monstrous power of the ticket in British politics, and the disposition to vote against old enemies without too much sensitivity as to who carries one’s own banner, will put a wind behind him. The shape of a Benn government within a couple of years is already discernible.

It would involve, if true to its protests, a siege economy; effective withdrawal from NATO (Labour is already committed to nuclear disarmament under Foot); a marked campaign against the police, whom Benn seems to believe are being prepared for a *putsch* against him; the nationalisation of the sub-

stance of the British economy; and its unlimited subsidisation behind what would be not the old exchange controls, but a sort of non-negotiable, zeroed-out British *zloty*. Whether Benn wanted it or not, we should almost certainly see the various Leftists and “militant” groups arranging *ad hoc* to set up some sort of Workers’ Militia. In the words of the old Chinese curse, we would live in interesting times.

SO WHAT CAN happen to prevent this? The most succinct answer is probably the panic which is already showing. The Social Democratic Party is one instance of it. The official Labour leadership—what Harold Wilson long ago, and gently including himself, called “the soft left” (Foot himself, John Silkin, Stanley Orme)—plus the soft right (Eric Varley, John Smith, Gerald Kaufman, with Peter Shore as a rather knobbly component) are sufficiently appalled by Benn to be offering some resistance. The mind has been wonderfully concentrated—but the gallows is half erected.

Michael Foot, who normally fooms along without notes, recently delivered himself at a Shadow Cabinet meeting of a 24-page indictment against an astounded and for once wrong-footed Tony Benn, quoting chapter and verse on his breach of Labour Party rules and his trampling-down of the convention of collective responsibility. Silkin, a rather humorous, cynical man, has bravely put his own head where it can be lopped off, running a dummy candidacy to siphon off the votes of the Transport and General Workers’ Union, who have some ties with him. It looks, at present, as if he will not succeed in diverting this support from Benn, and in the T&G decision may rest the result of the whole election.

Foot has also been notably brave in his public speeches. He recently abandoned a set text on his alternative economic policy to speak up for Denis Healey against a mob of unengaging young men in black leather jackets, whose tactic against the deputy leader was to shout him down with synchronised chants of “*Benn! Benn!*” The Old Left is conscious of facing a breakdown of civility. It would not privately dissent from Shirley Williams’ characterisation at last year’s Party conference of “Left Fascists.” A lot of marching and meeting-breaking is going on. The whole tone has transmuted quotidian rancour to a sort of brutishness.

At the same time, back-benchers are under assault from the new process of re-selection. Some manage to beat it off, one (Tom Williams) has fled, another (Eric Ogden) has been defeated. There will be many more. So where does the Labour Party go? Will it obey the branches of “Militant Tendency”, which open in ever more constituencies, and submissively become a Party fit for

Benn to lead? Will it do what one front-bencher outlined to me?

"I owe the Labour Party everything. If it becomes intolerable, as it well may, I shan't fight a public battle. I shall just quietly get up and go away. . . ."

Certainly there will be many who will turn away sorrowing. Some individuals may move over to the Social Democrats, but I do not expect any mass haemorrhage.

IF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS would use their assets more intelligently, there would be altogether higher hopes. They are in business, after all, as the Labour Party of 20 years ago, for which there is enormous *tendresse* and nostalgia. They are the sort of people you would be happy to see your daughter voting for, but. . . . The "but" derives from their lack of tactical sense, the degree of muted squabbling over precedence, their failure to get adequate exposure to the dozen substantial MPs who are their parliamentary nucleus, and their indecision as to whether they should be taking on Left-wingers in Labour seats or picking up the soft-target Government suburban seats.

The Social Democrats have had to hang fire since their early brilliant showing, and they surely made a tactical error in not putting two or three of their seats on the line in self-induced by-elections. Had they been defeated, they would have learnt early what they will otherwise learn late. A triumph, on the other hand, would have been a great bringer-on of departures by those numerous MPs who regard the Labour Party as a hole to be got out of—if only they can find a better one to go to.

The SDP were stuck with what fortune distributed, in a parliament thin in deaths and promotions; and fortune dealt them Warrington—about the worst by-election imaginable. Not, that is, in being a Labour castellation with a huge majority, but in being a seat where the Left-Right row was distant metropolitan news, where there was no organic local struggle familiar to the constituents. Roy Jenkins, bravely and rightly descending upon Warrington, had inevitably to look like visiting gentry; but his share of the poll—42%—was impressive. But the Social Democrats, who do indeed have a great deal going for them in middling temperate Britain, need victories to seed other victories and to shift electoral geography.

If by-elections were fought in towns where the struggle was local and long-standing, they could realistically expect to win; by proving their viability they could turn goodwill and inclination among many sitting Members into the split and realignment they seek.

BUT IF THE Social Democrats have not yet found their fire power in the general response to Benn, what about the Tories? For the moment morale holds up, though one lives in daily expectation of the classic Conservative response to pressure (at least since the time of Mr Macmillan)—panic.

Because we are going through a recession, and because British manufacturing industry has run up higher labour unit costs for less productivity than anybody else in the serious business of making anything, Britain has collected the worst unemployment statistics in sight. To these have been added disastrously an outbreak of rioting across the country—in West Indian Brixton, in Asian Southall (a separate case because grossly provoked by "skinheads", a species of local white we can do without), in the doomed self-destroying city of Liverpool where factories go to die, in the London suburb of Wood Green, and in Moss Side, Manchester (all these last three being predominantly Black riots, although on the third evening the whites of Toxteth had a sort of Ladies' Night to get into the looting). Bits of London and Liverpool now have a kissing cousinhood with the South Bronx.

From such melancholy and smoking scenery wrong unnerved policies commonly come. It is possible that the Government might try to undertake general reflation, although James Prior, the most intelligent of Mrs Thatcher's critics within the Cabinet, made an excellent speech in the House acknowledging the impossibility of such a course. In fact, as the Government must know, even if the fifteen billion pounds now expended on unemployment pay was allotted to job creation they would not get the number out of work below the figure of two million. We are in a pit which we spent 20 years a-digging, many of them with a reflationary shovel. The Government may be in that desperate corner where the only weapon available to it is rational argument.

In such conditions Mr Benn is well suited. Institutionally he has the Labour Party by the ears. Very likely within two years' time he will be its leader. The rightward schism alone troubles him; it now has potential.

One possible response is a deal over the head of Margaret Thatcher (who has saddled herself with some strenuously disloyal Ministers) and a panic attempt by "wet" Tories to seek some sort of arrangement with Liberals, Social Democrats, and any part of the Labour mainline which will talk—for the purpose of "stopping Benn."

The last victim of Benn might just be Margaret Thatcher. Nationally she is respected (and rightly) but not loved; not only are the hard times her times, but she has a certain brisk manner which grates, and the Tory establishment has a taste for oil. They also have a weakness for metaphors by which Thatcher and Benn are seen, grotesquely, as

parallel extremes.

Certainly dreams are dreamed of how a bland face might replace a fierce one without substantially changing policies, for Mrs Thatcher is in fact unloading money into public loss-makers at a fair old rate. After the huge handouts to the British Steel Corporation and to British Leyland, one Tory back-bencher remarked, "We get the name of running Count Dracula's castle, when in practice we are handling a mobile blood transfusion unit."

Such dreams will probably come to nothing, if only because Mrs Thatcher has far more support among her back-benchers than she does in her Cabinet—an extraordinary paradox. Almost certainly, the Tories' best course (and by extension that of those non-Tories who see a Benn government as an irreversible step into a coercive, expropriatory, freedom-rationing nightmare) is for the Government to stand pat upon reason, and to drum in the twenty-year decline. . . .

People are not the fools some politicians think them. The broad historical responsibility for our decay is there to be spelt out, and most people have a notion of it in their finger-ends. There is a lot of panic about, a lot of talk about Proportional Representation, middle ways, coalitions of moderate men, fallacy by other names. There is much more to be said for the motto of Frederick the Great in worse times: "*Durchhalten*"—"Hold on."

European Diary

A Dividend for Marchais

By François Bondy

Paris

I SUPPOSE that one must now, in the light of what has just happened, take a backward glance at the phenomenon of "Euro-Communism" (about which I and George Urban and others have written so much in these columns). There were the Big Three: Berlinguer, Carrillo, Marchais; and all of them in varying degrees seemed to be wrestling with similar ideological problems. These included: a new critical distance to the USSR and Kremlin foreign policy; a doctrinal abandonment of the theorems of "the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" and a One-Party régime; a readiness to make long-term alliances with Socialists and Social Democrats and indeed with bourgeois-liberal parties; and a perspective of extending the social achievements of "bourgeois democracy" without abandoning civil liberties (no longer taken to be mere "illusions" and "formal" freedoms).

All of us, amateur and professional bird-watchers of the Party Line, came to two conclusions when faced with the question of why the Spanish, Italian, and French Communist Parties were whirling about so unusually, and chirping such strange songs.

1. In the first place, it appeared to be a strategy to move closer to the levers of state power. There seemed to be a recognition of what had to be avoided: namely, their long-range exclusion from all important governmental decisions as a "permanent opposition", as well as a sharpening of the struggle into civil-war proportions which could only lead to some reactionary-authoritarian régime coming to power. Berlinguer dramatised the point by referring to the end of President Allende in Chile when he explained to the Italian comrades the importance of an "historic compromise" with Christian Democrats.

2. At the same time it all had to do with the historic troubles which have long afflicted the Soviet claim to ultimate leadership of all the parties in their Communist International. It was, after all, Palmiro Togliatti, the late leader of the Italian Communists, who first announced "Polycentrism." It was also part of the growing mental inability to defend "the Soviet model" of a New Society, and even more to apologise for such "progressive" interventions as the "brotherly" invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

It was, no doubt, Carrillo who went further than the others in his critique of the USSR (once the "workers' paradise"), in his acknowledgment of the merits of "pluralistic democracy" (once a mere capitalistic sham). By contrast Marchais seemed only to be paying reluctant lip-service to the new ideological notions; his formulations sounded rough and opportunistic. It was hardly out of character when just before the Parliamentary elections in France in 1978 he instigated the break-up of the Left Coalition and subsequently acceded to Brezhnev's demands for "solidarity" with the Soviet move into Afghanistan. During the recent campaign Marchais was in fine old form, defending "the French proletariat" as his local mayoralty candidates took brutal measures against foreign workers in the Paris suburbs; and not least, castigating the socialist campaign of François Mitterrand.

AND YET THE PARTY found itself in a position to be able to snatch an historic victory from the jaws of an electoral defeat wherein a fourth of its traditional voters went elsewhere. The price of having four Ministers in the new Cabinet may have been humiliating, but it was quickly paid. To what extent this will further weaken the Party or enable it to rally its followers remains to be seen. But who

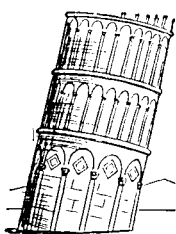
was there in the 1970s who would have predicted that, after turning its back on "Euro-Communism" and breaking with a Socialist movement that grew to command an absolute nation-wide majority, the Party would be rewarded with just those prizes that seemed to have been finally lost?

And what of the brave new world of Euro-Communist ideals in Spain and Italy? Here all the hopes of the "democratised" strategy and tactics turned out to be chimerical. Nothing paid off. In Spain the Catalans revolted against Carrillo, and there were serious intellectual defections as the contrast between a liberalised ideology and the old authoritarian Party structure became glaring. In Italy the Communists appear to be as far from having a share of governmental power as ever before. Their electoral support has been dwindling from old-time highs, and Signor Craxi's Socialist Party has been renewing itself and growing.

Politics has its paradoxes. As in the dealings of the Bourse, dividends are often paid out not to those who have invested but to those who have sold short.

Italian Miracle

Milan



THERE ARE very few observers who have taken on the challenge of trying to explain "the Italian miracle", namely the wondrous survival of this land wracked by more troubles than most ordinary nations could live through. ENCOUNTER readers will recall the ingenious interpreta-

tions in these pages by Domenico Bartoli, one of the most keen-witted of Italian journalists (a former Editor of *Il resto del Carlino* and *La Nazione*).¹ After an earlier book on the "Italian No-Man's-Land" he has now taken another look at the roots of the Italian malaise in a book entitled *The Years of the Storm* (*Gli anni della tempesta: Alle radici dei malessere Italiano*, Editoriale Nuova, Milano).

No one can fail to be astonished by the relative stability of Italian life, despite the Terror from an "Armed Party" which is still powerful and despite corruption scandals which proliferate sinisterly, even beyond the range of the traditional Mafia and the "sottogoverno." The way the Italians order these things nowadays has miraculous qualities, though quite different ones from the "Italian Miracle" which characterised the dynamic burst of

economic energies in the first two decades after the end of Mussolini's régime.

The puzzle is everyday: how can so much private initiative still develop in a society which combines a maximum of bureaucratic inefficiency with a minimum of governmental authority and decisiveness? How can the great nationalised industries actually keep going when managers never have time to go in for business management but need all their time and knowhow to manoeuvre in the political jungle? How can things add up when no amount of unprofitability and deficit ever leads to a bankruptcy? And how can the tax-payer (who rarely pays taxes) pay for everything in an increasingly devalued currency?

BARTOLI'S POINT OF DEPARTURE is the "third disaster." For him the first disaster was the collapse of Liberal Italy between 1922 and 1925; and the second catastrophe was the collapse of Fascism in a senseless war. The economic and political "decay" since 1970 is the third disaster in a time-span of only 60 years. Bartoli has an historical sense, and Fascism for him remains a piece of Italian history and not (as it is often presented) the story of an adventurous demagogic *Condottiere*. Only in recent years, especially after the recognition in many Italian circles of the emptiness of the old tag "anti-Fascist", have there been real attempts to make hard sense of the past.

One cannot help, therefore, being struck by certain Italian patterns of adjustment to and compromise with strong political power that have a disconcertingly topicality. How easy it has apparently been for well-known Fascists to make the transition to the Catholic forces or to the Communist Party, simply by substituting one rhetorical style for another. The examples Bartoli offers are embarrassingly numerous; but then there is also the opposite movement, and he recalls one Mussolini "true believer" (even in the lunacies of a Nazi-style *Rassenpolitik*) who turned, changed, and finally died in one of Hitler's concentration camps.

AFTER 1945, failing the active presence of national traditions, the country seemed to be turning to a kind of "Church-State" form. But if there was an Alcide de Gasperi who defended principled positions (his "Austrian" background?), there was also the flexible opportunism of an Andreotti who could move easily from extreme clericalism to an alliance with the Communists.

Still, these may only be the wriggings on the agitated political surface. Deep down there are other factors such as the decline of marriage and the fall in the population, rising unemployment and the mounting numbers of foreign (African) workers trying to improve themselves in a "modern

¹ See Domenico Bartoli, "Italy's Ailment" ENCOUNTER, August 1976.

economy" where certain jobs will just find no native takers. The firmly cemented position of the trade unions in an industrial society—sometimes taking "dogmatic" decisions, sometimes (as in England) being merely "bloody-minded"—has also played a role in paralysing some of the new-found dynamism. Still, Italians will not be put down. I note that in Turin recently, the workers, faced with an arbitrary call to down tools and go out on strike, took to the streets to demonstrate their unwillingness.

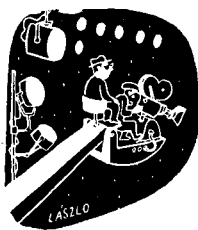
IT IS A THESIS full of ironies that Bartoli is offering us—on the one hand a dedication to extremist activities, and on the other a devotion to entitlements for jobs and pensions. In Italy we can see "revolutionification" and "bureaucratisation" going hand in hand, as Post-Industrial Man demands at one and the same time his rights and privileges and all other appurtenances from a despised State which he steadily wants to weaken, and if possible see disappear. If this is Bartoli's "Italian Paradox", then it would be foolish to expect any kind of better future, only a hardening of the well-known Italian difficulties. But Italy has never been short of ingenuity, and it seems constantly to be able to find new uses for old abuses.

F.B.

No Hollywood on the Thames

By J. M. Kerstin

London



WHEN I embarked on the career of movie entrepreneur (one good step before graduating to "movie producer") I was warned by a literary friend: "In that industry they're either scoundrels, or stupid—probably both—you'd have to be like them to succeed..." Others gave me similar warnings, but I decided these were not men (or women) of action. My own ability as an impresario or manager had surely been tested years earlier in other contexts, and overcoming obstacles was a challenge, an attraction.

It has to be acknowledged that my literary friend was right about the British movie industry. He avoided the film-making business, and is now a happy and useful man of the world. But what

happens to those of us who have, instead, taken a plunge into "Hollywood-on-the-Thames"?

I bought a literary property, a best-selling novel that I believed in; the author was a clever, perceptive man with many published books behind him. A screenplay was commissioned from an English scriptwriter, a film budget drawn up, a good professional director signed. The story, international in scope and interest, takes place in Britain, and was to be filmed locally with an almost completely British cast: just the type of international feature film, with British roots, that observers of the local movie industry have clamoured for.

To set up a feature film you need three additional things: a cast, a film studio/distributor—and the money. The first and last items are intertwined in the famous vicious circle. Find the money and you get the stars; sign up the stars and you can locate the money. If you have neither, it is almost impossible to break that circle. But movie-studio involvement is just as crucial. If a studio likes the project it will agree to distribute the film, and in most cases such an agreement "up front" is imperative to ensure that the finished movie will be exhibited. The studio may—or may not—help to finance the making of the film with its own sources of production cash, usually borrowed from banks. Even if the studio does not provide all of the film's production budget, its very involvement in the enterprise may act as an incentive to private investors.

IN BRITAIN the three main film distributors are EMI, Rank, and Lew Grade's ACC (Associated Communications Corporation, formerly ATV): the rough equivalents to American studios such as Paramount, MGM or Warner Bros. Since last summer Rank does not finance films, and therefore no longer counts as a "studio" in the American sense, though it owns the largest movie-making facility in Europe (Pinewood Studios). Ealing Studios and Alexander Korda's "British Lion" once flourished here as movie studios, but have managed to sink without trace.

To consider a film project, a studio must have somebody to read and evaluate the screenplays submitted to it. In his company, Lord Grade is reputed to read most screenplays himself. At Rank and EMI, initial judgment of a script is handled either by an office assistant or by a specialised reader. The executives who, in the end, decide whether or not a film is to be made usually base their assessment mainly on the reader's report. I found it quite futile to point out various helpful factors, for example that a "top director" was signed up, or that a certain actress might want to star in the film, or that investment sources were

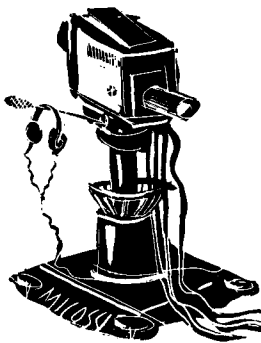
available if distribution could be assured. . . .

More discouraging, the fact that the background of the story is British seemed to work against it. "British-based films don't sell in the US", I was repeatedly told. This self-sustaining fable, borne out by statistics ten or more years ago, has since taken on the force of folklore among many movie-types. For many years no studio has tried to make a really superior British-subject film, and studio minions continue in the superstition that even good British films of the future will fare as badly as mediocre ones of the past. Try to tell one of the would-be movie-moguls in Britain that many Americans today are interested in Britain—that music, theatre, Mrs Thatcher, world politics, economics, tourism, sports, TV shows, have brought us "closer" together. "*Who Dares, Wins*" is quite definitely not a motto for Wardour Street; and no one seems to take notice of thoroughly British successes on American television.

SO, IN THE EARLY stages a screenplay is the admission ticket to further talks with a studio. Yet the reply is almost always a simple "Yes" or "No"—very seldom a "Maybe . . . if" as the basis for an exchange of ideas. Since a screenplay can be revised and rewritten up to the last moment of shooting a scene, one has the impression of dealing not with men of ideas, but with men, and sometimes women, of limited scope, caught up in narrow preconceptions. People with imagination, if doubtful about something, will open themselves to discussion; those less certain of their acumen tend to shelter behind readers' reports, side-stepping any give-and-take with an outsider. Consultations like that might result in a fine motion-picture, but might also disclose the executive's "creative" limitations—evidently too high a cost to pay if it can be avoided. The screenplay is simply mailed back with a standard glib rejection (borrowed from Manhattan): "*Have a nice day!*"

Observing these film executives a little more

Projecting Britain's Image



WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, contributors to and unshakeable believers in British film, seek to express the desperate concern we all share for the future of our native industry. All signs indicate the production of a mere handful of British feature films in the coming year, a cultural and economic outlook which we believe to be disastrous.

Unless steps are taken immediately, our cinema and television screens will soon be totally dominated by film entertainment from foreign sources. We therefore urge upon Parliament the following:

1 THE EXTENSION of the Eady Levy to apply to cinema films exhibited on television. Currently, cinema exhibitors, distributors and producers under this scheme all contribute from their shares of total revenues. It is, incidentally, a levy applying equally to foreign films, something which Hollywood has generously accepted.

The ludicrous situation of the present largest exhibitor of film—television—being exempt from such payments must be changed. ITV last year showed 328 films made originally for the cinema.

Over the past Christmas holiday period alone, the BBC proudly proclaimed that it would transmit over 60 feature films. Both networks freely acknowledge that the cost of their producing entertainment of comparable variety, quality and appeal would be enormously greater than the sums they have paid over the years for cinema films.

In the light of this situation, the revenues received by film makers from United Kingdom television have, to date, been derisory. The justice of television companies contributing to the fund could not be more self evident.

2 FOR VARIOUS historic reasons, film and television are subject to supervision and control by a number of Government bodies, eg the Department of Trade, the Ministry for the Arts, the Post Office, the Home Office, the IBA—a situation doubtless relished by civil servants but few others. We suggest that such a mixture of authorities is wasteful government, results only in conflict and confusion and is demonstrably frustrating to the film-maker.

We advocate, therefore, the establishment within a single ministry of a new statutory body, whose duties, *inter alia*, would be to examine the existing legislation affecting film and television. It should also be the principal adviser to the Government on all matters relating to the audio-visual entertainment industry.

3 WE BELIEVE that the deplorable restrictive practices present in the film industry, both in its distribution and exhibition, must be changed. A

closely, the film critic Alexander Walker theorised in a recent radio interview about their *petit-bourgeois* background; the sort of film they choose to make often reflects their own links with the past, conscious or not. One could add that many are self-made men who had a rough past as unloved outsiders. Some of them certainly were great risk-takers in their early endeavours (when they had little to lose); but in the comfort of their present luxury and power, or semblance of power, are no longer interested in daring ventures.

TAKE the Rank Organisation. Around 1966 it shut down its movie-production arm, ostensibly on orders from John Davis who had ascended to Chairman from an accounting background. It is said that Sir John (as he became) saved the Rank Organisation by various moves,

but one wonders why a rich and prestigious company like Rank could not continue to make films, as others do, who prosper at it. John Davis in the 1960s pointed Rank away from film-making, and into the direction of Xerox copying machines.

In 1977, "Rank Film Productions" was revived after more than ten years of inactivity, but the faceless men who took the decision proceeded to choose an unknown as the new company's managing director. I use the title hesitantly, for the man never was, from start to finish apparently, endowed with an official title. At least none showed on his letterhead, or under his signature. Rank went into production in 1977 with so much élan and flair, not to mention determination, that their chosen manager was effectively only pencilled in. After such a knees-shaking approach, it appeared almost predictable that the venture would fail. This is not written merely with hindsight; there were those who foresaw that the effort to get Rank back into film-making would fail if it were not run by persons with some courage and (if you will) "dynamism", and said as much to Rank officials.

The well-meaning young man, head of Rank Film Productions, was given plush offices at Pinewood Studios, and proceeded to read and evaluate scripts. The few films (eight in all) based on his artistic judgment closed down the whole operation within 36 months.

This was no mogul, but a 9-to-5 salaried employee, as were all his seniors. It is conceivable that some of his choices were admirable, but were vetoed by the Rank board in their collective trepidation. The internal mechanics seem less important than the results: uniformly mediocre movies, not one memorable film, except perhaps the thrice-made *Thirty-Nine Steps*, itself a remake of a remake.

This whiz-kid-on-probation had a theory... or was it dogma? "We don't want to make films that are a threat to the audience. We're aiming for the 16-to-24-year-olds, and we want to make escapist films like *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*..." He was mesmerised (as are many of his colleagues in the other Hollywood) by the current trend of successful films. A few years earlier he would have jumped on the bandwagon of *Sharks*, or *Fires-on-the-75th-floor*, or *Upside-down cruise-liners*. Now it was *Outer Space* because, as he reverently continued: "...the threat to the audience is so far away, so distant and remote, that our audiences will not become unduly alarmed... we want to avoid films of violence and terrorism...", or words in that vein.

The result of this myopia, blurrily focusing on escapist film stories for post-adolescents, will remain a blot on the Rank name, and on Britain's capacity to produce significant films. The people who made *Star Wars* took great risks (and made a fortune) by venturing an original subject. Rank

primary task of the new ministerial/statutory body would be to monitor this aspect of the industry; and further, to prevent a similar growth of monopolistic practices within the developing technologies (satellite, cable, videodisc, etc), so that genuine and healthy competition may be enjoyed by all those engaged in film-making.

WE WISH to see the image of Britain projected throughout the world. There is certainly no lack of talent: we have writers, directors, producers, actors, technicians and craftsmen in generous supply. What we lack is genuine competition in the domestic market; a continuity of finance; and a focal body directly representing a broader industry to Government and Parliament.

Given this, it is our belief that Britain, once again, could be in the forefront of creative and commercial film-making throughout the world.

ROBERT BOLT	JOSEPH LOSEY
JOHN BOULTING	S. LIEBERSON
ROY BOULTING	MILES
DON BOYD	CHRISTOPHER MILES
TIMOTHY BURRILL	LAURENCE OLIVIER
RICHARD CRAVEN	HAROLD PINTER
BRYAN FORBES	OTTO PLASCHKE
JACK GOLD	NICOLAS ROEG
BARRY HANSON	JOHN SCHLESINGER
MIKE HODGES	KENITH TRODD
LIONEL JEFFRIES	

THE TIMES (London)

chose to follow... years too late. Writing with sarcastic prescience in the *Sunday Times* of 25 April 1976, Philip Oakes commented on the profits that *Bugsy Malone* was earning for the Rank Organisation, which seemed incapable even of coordinating exhibition dates in its theatres with the school holidays.

"It's very odd, like most of the Rank Organisation's meanderings. The truth is, perhaps, that it's been so long since they've had a good movie on their hands that they've forgotten what to do with it."

Those words were written more than a year before Rank's wholly-owned, and ill-fated, production branch was reactivated.

WORSE THAN ANY BLOT on a reputation is the calamity of lost jobs, present and future, over the entire field of national film-making: writers, novelists, actors, actresses, directors, editors, film cameramen, engineers, technicians... down to the most ephemeral part-time extra, who might have been given a chance. Even if today many are employed in the British film industry, many *more* could be if the decision-makers had the courage to progress, instead of running backwards.

Then there is a general cultural loss that, in the long run, may prove more damaging than the lost jobs and opportunities. Good films that are never made cannot be shown 30 or 50 years from now, so in a sense this is a loss that will go on forever. The British Isles are reduced to two "major" film production companies. One, EMI, known for its eager propensity to invest in American-made films like *The Deer Hunter*, has proudly set up a California headquarters in Beverly Hills to cater to international audiences.¹ The other, Lord Grade's ACC/ATV, has made a string of films, including the financially successful series of *Pink Panther* comedies, but has yet to produce a really significant British movie for all its years of trying. Early in 1980 Lord Grade released a brand-new remake of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, having apparently run out of original stories. More recently, his *Raise the Titanic*—a disaster film in more ways than one—cost \$35 millions. Not only did it receive bad

American reviews, but when it opened in London all three top Sunday newspapers were dismissive to the point of contempt: the *Sunday Times* (16 November 1980) stated that the film "... has only five minutes worth watching", while the *Sunday Telegraph* wondered if the \$35 millions had been spent on water costs for the gigantic studio tank.

Meanwhile really original film properties, like *Midnight Express* or *Day of the Jackal*, are rejected for their very originality. The Jackal novel was turned down by every studio with remarks like "no one cares about France", until Sir John Woolf produced it himself—the first of a series of startlingly successful films of Forsyth books.

Yet if EMI and ACC/ATV know how to make money from film-making, what about motion pictures that reflect life in Britain today, and not only the low life, or social problems of teen-age delinquents? Where is the spirit that once made the unforgettable comedies, the Carol Reed thrillers, the love stories such as *Brief Encounter*, and masterpieces like *The Red Shoes* and *Henry V*? David Puttnam, the successful English producer of hits like *Midnight Express* and *Bugsy Malone*, said in a *Sunday Times* article (11 May 1980):

"The question is whether or not you believe there is any reason to make British films.... I know they say here that only the big, expensive mid-Atlantic films have a chance. Well, *Kramer vs Kramer* is in no way a big film. It is a simple story dealt with in depth by a writer-director who believed in what he was doing."

And he added, "I happen to feel that it is desperately important to create a film industry which reflects our own national identity."

ALEXANDER WALKER has been expounding this view from the rooftops for years. In a *Standard* article last year he asked, in effect, "Where are the films enduringly British in ideas and inspiration?" A few weeks later he was quoting the annual report of the National Film Finance Corporation: "There are so few British films dealing with British life and manners that they are a largely unknown quantity to British audiences."² Earlier, on 16 July 1977, the movie trade paper *Screen International* was reporting that "British exhibitors fear they may not be able to fulfil their quota obligations for 1977, because of the great shortage of British product...." The same journal quoted the successful producer Michael White two months later: "There's this old myth that English things don't do well in the States. It's simply not true...." Farther back (in its issue of 9 August 1975), *CinemaTV Today* interviewed another producer, Michael Klinger: "We have the greatest wealth of talent here in Britain. But, on the whole, we don't use it

¹Barry Spikings, chief executive of EMI Films, is quoted in the *New Standard* of 26 November 1980 as stating that over half of EMI's pictures in 1981 will be made outside the UK, and the paper adds some convincing gossip: Spikings is about to buy himself a beach house on the Malibu coast, near Los Angeles. Spikings and Michael Deeley took over British Lion Films Ltd in 1973, and within four years had "merged" it with EMI; British Lion vanished as a company and film-maker.

²Barry Spikings replied that this sounded to him "more like propaganda than film-making."

properly. We don't know our own potential. There is a great big hungry market out there waiting for films. . . ."

Some of the unduly modest horizons of the establishment film industry result from the stuffiness of British bankers, who have almost never recognised the true potential of a thriving cinema. In March 1980 the British director John Schlesinger, who lives in the US, was interviewed on a BBC-2 *Man Alive* programme about the sorry state of the British film industry. The *Daily Mail* reported that Schlesinger, the director of "superior English films like *Darling* and *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*, spoke testily of the 'total timidity' of British film financiers whose inertia and caution he found in vivid contrast to the energy and optimism of Americans." The English actress Helen Mirren, interviewed in the *Herald Tribune* (30 August 1980), said it perfectly:

"In England, film financiers are terrified of losing money, which is why they lose money. They don't think, 'Can we make a good film?' They think, 'Can we sell this film to America?'"

And before her (in a *Newsweek* interview of 26 July 1976) Glenda Jackson declared, "It is a mistake to think that a British film industry exists at all."

LAST YEAR Rank ran a national advertising campaign for its latest film, *Eagle's Wing*. Extracts from a *Daily Mail* review were boldly quoted: "... mightily impressive . . . at last, a British-backed film we can be proud of"; and from the *Financial Times*: "... a bizarre and beautiful Western, soars higher than any British-backed and British-directed film in recent memory." What was this "British" film Rank was so proudly announcing? A story of Comanche Indians in the Far West! At EMI, after the box-office success of *Murder on the Orient Express*, it is almost surprising that someone has not yet brought out a sequel titled *Occident Express* with the train running in the opposite direction.

Dilys Powell, film critic of the *Sunday Times*, made a creative suggestion several years ago. One of her articles was reprinted in *Screen International* (7 February 1976) with a three-column headline: "*The British Film Industry needs an Irving Thalberg.*" (Thalberg was the young, dynamic and cultivated boss of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer until he died in 1936 at the age of 37.)

"A national cinema can't live without the support also of an intellectually demanding and discriminating audience. . . . One still hopes for a cinema with its roots in this country."

Some have wondered publicly when a new Alexander Korda will finally appear on the British movie scene, while others view the problem as a

wider one. The late Robert Shaw, interviewed at the height of his international acting career, said (in the *Herald Tribune*, 8 August 1975):

"The English inferiority complex, from the Prime Minister to the captain of the best cricket team, is huge, massive. That's why they knock each other all the time, pull each other down. In America you create heroes until they're failures. England makes heroes, then destroys them. Then they rehabilitate them when they're 70."

ARE THE AMERICANS any better? They still have seven major studios, all alive and kicking; every now and then memorable films are made. Accountants, agents, lawyers and ex-office boys have risen to the top there too; and though no Selznicks or Louis Mayers are in sight, they manage, out of the cauldron of properties and deals, to get significant pictures made, and take risks doing it. No one with the backing and resources of a Rank Organisation would close up shop after a mere three-year dry run. People might get sacked or replaced; there might be a top-to-bottom shake-out; but the whole thing would not be written off, as it was here, because of a year or two of relatively minor losses. In 1979 the profits of Rank Organisation Ltd were reported as £131 millions, on revenues of close to half a billion pounds. In that same year their film production operation lost £1.6 million. What kind of people panic irreversibly at a one-year loss like that? The novelist and playwright Frederic Raphael was prophetic in an interview with *Screen International* (21 February 1976):

"The fact is, when the Americans find something doesn't work they try another way. We have this terrible tendency to sit down in the road and say 'Take me home'."

And Alexander Walker once again:

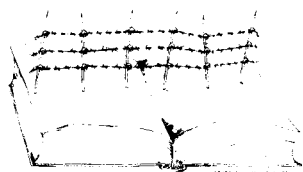
"The Americans will take chances gladly that our film people couldn't be forced into, even after lunch at Les Ambassadeurs or supper at the White Elephant. . . ."

Where are the entrepreneurs? Well, I have tried to be one, and there are others like me, but still this brick wall looms, manned by provincial accountants in their executive suites, non-creative, unimaginative, unoriginal, lacking both conviction and guts. They play it safe, avoiding the storms of risk-taking, and innumerable hopeful British movie projects continue to hang fire. The result is to drown part of Britain's heritage, of which these bookkeeper-types have been lucky enough to be the temporary, if bankrupt, custodians. Lightweights all, they should be sent back to polishing the handle of the big front door.

Letter from Belfast

A Word for the Ulster Protestant

By John Archer



FOR OVER A decade everyone has been forced to know that there is an Ulster Question. Too many millions of words have been written, too many thoughtful television programmes presented. But it has been Hamlet-without-the-Prince, because the conventional Ulster Protestant, who poses much of "the Question", has never had a large enough part in explaining it.

The problem has been treated in political terms and has been dealt with by political spokesmen, yet in essence the issue is cultural. Ulster Protestants do not conceive themselves to be anything but British. They regard Irish separatism as regressive and Englishness by itself as incomplete. Although this point of view is more or less unchallengeable, it is inconvenient to other groups.

As an Ulster Protestant I find the situation unpleasant. There is certainly a sense, however, in which difficulties are opportunities. Arnold Toynbee says that when people from the same stock as Ulster Protestants lived in the Southern Uplands of Scotland they were "challenged" too little and when they were in Appalachia they were "challenged" too much. In Ulster the balance was right, and considerable achievement followed. If Toynbee were writing today he might say that Ulster Protestants faced "a new challenge." This time it would merely be a matter of enlarging the cultural perspectives of other people living in our archipelago.

Educated people in the British Isles used to feel more alike than they do now. Before the ravages of 1912-22—that disastrous period when Irish Nationalists were defeated by Sinn Féin, and Ulster Unionists had to accept Home Rule—it was assumed that the archipelago was a cultural unit. There were "sub-cultures" within it, but no one was a foreigner. Irish Nationalists might see Ulster as "a province" within *their* province but then their aim was to make Dublin a centre for administration devolved by Westminster. Similar measures were predicted for Edinburgh or Cardiff. These were the domesticated nationalisms which are still vigorous in the world of international sport.

In that wider world it had been natural for many Irish people to be prominent in national life. They were Irish—but much more they were British. The high point was reached with the careers of Wellington and Castlereagh, and there were many others, particularly in Indian affairs (like the Lawrences) or the Army (Wolseley) or the Law (Cairns or Russell of Killowen). For my purpose the most significant names would be W. B. Yeats and George Bernard Shaw. Neither could be regarded as provincial: both carried an Irish note into metropolitan culture. (Seamus Heaney is a modern analogue.)

The British archipelago was split politically in the 1920s, and there were corresponding cultural breaks. In *both* parts of Ireland it was, in my view, a triumph for barbarism and religion, but because the Irish Free State had to create a separate cultural identity the truncation it imposed on itself was drastic. I need not enlarge on the bad effects of concentrating school attention on Irish History and Geography or on the shibboleth of the Irish Language. The result is a population that has been deprived of its mainstream heritage. Fortunately the BBC is widely received in the Republic, but that is no substitute for a more comprehensive cultural base.

In England real knowledge of Ireland became rare. In its place there were literary images taken from the Anglo-Irish writers, and political images which included men-in-trench-coats. These images mingled in eclectic confusion, and English liberals might mistakenly suppose that the sophisticated talents of Swift, Burke, or Joyce were precursors of a triumphalist catholic state.

"The Irish Question" had been resolved so painfully that there was a basic wish to turn away from Irish affairs. Soon the wreckages of history were being treated as inevitable, and Irish separatism had become a liberal triumph. Since Ulster Protestants continued to be British they suffered a double handicap: by rejecting a nationalism that English liberals endorsed, they dragged those liberals back to an intolerable Irish bog.

IT IS THIS CULTURAL BACKGROUND that explains the imaginative failure of cross-channel observers. Otherwise it might seem astonishing that an able *Sunday Times* reporter like John Whale, after much painstaking enquiry, believes there is only a tiny number of "British" Ulstermen. His mental block prevents him from accepting Ulstermen as compatriots, however loudly that Border Poll, or anything they actually feel, may speak for Protestants. Similarly there is Keith Kyle's classic proposal (in *ENCOUNTER*, February 1980) to solve the power-sharing question by joining the contented populations of Donegal, Monaghan and

Cavan to the rest of the old province of Ulster. The journalist, seeing Antrim and Monaghan as one, forgot he was playing Metternich with national identities, and indeed with some 60 years of separate administration.

Perhaps we should not take the journalists, even the best of them, too seriously. But then there is Bishop Hanson (ENCOUNTER, October 1980), who scrupulously and publicly withdraws the hem of his garment from those dreadful Christians of Ulster. His message (like that of certain Belfast graffiti writers) is: Kill Sectarianism. But neither the Bishop's graffiti nor its proletarian brother actually promotes its good cause. Indeed the Bishop increases tensions because his violent language endorses the most vulgar stereotypes and distances his readers from Ulster people and problems. The Bishop is a distinguished theologian but apparently does not feel the genuine ambiguities and conflicts which Ulster should pose for any moralist: for him Reinhold Niebuhr wrote in vain. Like others, he seems to have forgotten that we are members one of another. For all their real integrity I am afraid that most cross-channel intellectuals express the perspectives of "Little England." It is time to do much better.

THESE MENTAL BLOCKAGES spread beyond England because of the Irish diaspora to the USA and Australia, and because Ireland raises unfamiliar problems. Nevertheless, it is very remarkable that so much effort has been applied to converting Ulster Protestants into what they are not. If only they could fit into the same mould as their Southern neighbours! Or if we are convinced that they won't, then at least they could adopt a local nationality like some Habsburg successor state. Yet the idea that anyone who is British could find his cultural identity in a toytown Ulster is so bizarre that it appeals only to an unholy alliance of empty-headed Ulstermen and observers with an axe to grind. If there are Habsburg analogies they are more with Sudeten Germans than with Czechs or Croats.

The outside believers in an Ulster identity have at least crossed the *pons asinorum*: they see that Ulster Protestants are not Irish Irelanders. Most Dublin commentators have not got so far. These mental difficulties affect even the most distinguished minds. Garret Fitzgerald, for instance, is convinced that there is a fundamental affinity between all Irish Catholics and Protestants because both

share a live Christian inheritance and both identify with each other (when away from Ireland). I do not think anyone else has made such an attractive public appeal. But even Dr Fitzgerald does not face the problem head on, for the cultural links which he proposes depend on the dubious vitality of Christianity and on a friendly rural society. The intellectual and moral factors that will most influence all Irish people are in fact urban and Anglo-American. From an Ulster Protestant point of view the problem is not why *he* is British, but why anyone else in the archipelago should wish not to be.

CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN speaks eloquently for the Ulster Protestant; so does Enoch Powell. But he rarely speaks much for himself, at least not at a cultural level. He has no compulsion to have a very distinctive voice. His voice—my voice, for example—is provincial, and a province does not need a serious cultural identity. It is happy to be part of a larger community. An Ulsterman may like to note the Ulster origins of C. S. Lewis, Louis MacNeice, Helen Waddell or Seamus Heaney. He may like to play with a hypothesis that Marshall McLuhan or Henry and William James were "really" Ulster Scots. But such fancies are antiquarian; it would be embarrassing to take them seriously. When the Duke of Wellington was reminded of his Irish origins he remarked that he was not a horse simply because he had been born in a stable.

Wellington expressed a pertinent attitude to one's native village, whether it is Belfast, Birmingham, or Dublin. At a serious level the village can not provide a cultural identity. If I am an Ulster Anglican I will turn naturally to Temple or Kirk: if an Ulster Presbyterian, to Bailie or Oman: if an Ulster Methodist, to Butterfield or Weatherhead. If I am an Ulster Catholic it may be to Etienne Gilson or Jacques Maritain, if not Hans Küng. If my religion is "the religion of all wise men", I must turn like everyone else to Darwin, Mill, Freud, Ayer and the rest of the Anglo-American sceptical pantheon. There are no thinkable local substitutes. Such an attitude is modest, rational, rock solid; and it is alien to any Irish yearning for "cultural self-sufficiency." It is not bounded by the United Kingdom, but it does have its locus there.

The deprivation involved in Irish cultural self-sufficiency may be illustrated by the case of Dr F. S. L. Lyons. In a recent lecture on "The Burden of our History" he showed that even for a Provost of Trinity College "our history" literally relates to the island of Ireland.¹ The meanest Belfast Protestant has a broader view. The lecture included a reference to a remark of Yeats about "the filthy modern tide" and expressed a fear that this tide

¹ See also F. S. L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, 1979). These Ford Lectures note the extent of "English" or "Anglo-American" culture in Ireland but nevertheless deal seriously only with "indigenous" cultural strands (another variant of Hamlet-without-the-Prince).

may overwhelm the several strands of indigenous Irish culture. These would include the strands which he identifies as the Anglo-Irish, the Catholic Gaelic, and the Ulster Protestant. The "filthy modern tide" which might overwhelm them is Anglo-American culture, and if that were the only future "it would hardly be worth surviving into."

These are strange sentiments, and in cruder forms they are ordinary Dublin coin. Yet the obstacles to taking Ulster as a basis for cultural identity apply almost as acutely to Ireland as a whole. One may make the attempt, but at any serious level one comes to an early stop—always remembering that James Joyce, the island's only modern literary genius, points in a cosmopolitan and anti-Catholic direction. His "*non serviam*" is not quite the same as a Protestant "*Ich kann nicht anders*"; but both point to more rational perspectives in Ireland, and neither identifies with cultural separatism. Anglo-American culture, no doubt in less popular forms than those which Dr Lyons would die rather than suffer, ought in fact to be appropriated by all reasonable people. I, for one, would be happy to contemplate the last Ulster Protestant and the last Gaelic Catholic being strangled metaphorically by the entrails of the last Little Englander—if the prize were to be an Anglo-American cultural archipelago.

The prospects for Dr Lyons' "indigenous cultures" are not good, yet while they exist these local identities do so much harm that it would be timely to look at Irish historiography to see whether it could diminish them. Perversely enough, it has become conventional to maintain that "a greater knowledge of Irish History" would help to reconcile Ulster and Irish differences: the magic that results from knowing that in fact the Pope supported William of Orange. . . .

Research may elucidate new detail, but it is not research which determines the truly fundamental themes. These depend on the preconceptions of historians—and any reader (or indeed any viewer of Robert Kee's BBC television series on the History of Ireland) will recognise that the emergence of the Irish Free State and the separation of the 26 counties from the United Kingdom has provided Irish historians with a unifying and congenial theme. This is the equivalent, in British terms, of "the Whig Interpretation of History", where freedom broadened down from precedent to precedent, and whatever had resulted politically was somehow right. In Irish historiography the theme still stands; far from creating harmony, it hobbles along on a crippled cultural base.

It would be better—such is my argument—to start again. The cultural divisions within and between these two islands should be treated as tragic. The attitudes that prevail must be seen as the poor, fragmented things they are. The history of Ireland should never be isolated from the history of

Great Britain; and, if pressed, I would question whether anyone should be a Professor of Irish history (or for that matter, Welsh or Scottish history). No educated person should be encouraged to see their parish in isolation; we should hasten the Anglo-American tide into new channels.

The Ulster Protestant cannot share the perspectives of "Little England" or "Greater Ireland." So he has the advantage that both his emotion and his reason point to real connections rather than old divisions. He is part of "Anglo-America." And therefore—if more or less by accident—he supports a more satisfying culture for the whole archipelago. It is time that his point of view became part of the conventional wisdom.

Educational Dilemmas: Why Study Russian?

By Z. A. B. Zeman

Lancaster



THE ATKINSON Report on the teaching of Russian at British universities, which appeared early last year, was a first exercise in rationalisation, undertaken in a small but vital university sector. Since then, bigger disasters have hit the universities. Nevertheless, the Report contained useful hints for the overall

development of the universities in the near future. Begun in the spirit of rationalisation and completed in an atmosphere of economic despondency, it stated flatly that there was "need for a radical programme of contraction, on which firm advice should be given."

"Rationalisation" means that small is ugly. In academic terms, it bids universities narrow their spectrum and concentrate on the subjects they are good at. The proposition raises at least three highly controversial issues. The first concerns the universities' autonomy; the second implies the impoverishment of academic curricula; the third

concerns value judgments—or who-is-good-at-what. But such judgments are difficult, especially in the border areas of the frontiers of knowledge.

It was recommended that the teaching of Russian should disappear from 18 universities or colleges. Many of the units involved were small (less than five staff members), but the report affected almost half the institutions of higher learning where Russian is being taught.

Their reactions have varied. Only one lecturer in Russian at Aberystwyth has been reliably reported to be prepared to move to the East European centre in Wales at Swansea. Several cities—Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester—have two universities, and these were recommended to merge their departments. Strathclyde, however, showed no inclination to give up its own department, which specialises in teaching Russian to scientists, to merge with the traditional, language- and literature-based department at the University of Glasgow. Arranging for Russian to be taught at one instead of two or more places in the same town should not be impossible; it is the more outlying universities with medium-sized departments which have caused problems. Keele, Reading, Sheffield, and Lancaster decided to disregard the recommendations and keep their Russian departments—but that was before the arrival of the University Grants Committee's letter of 2 July, which put an end to apprehension and told the quivering universities how the Government's required cuts were to be apportioned.

IN A WAY, the Atkinson Report was a trial balloon; the UGC letter introduced a much more radical plan for university reform, hitting hard at those big spenders, the scientific departments. After all, British universities spend only a fraction of their income on the teaching of modern languages, and an infinitesimal amount on the teaching of Russian. In the past few years there has been a sharp drop in the number of pupils taking Russian A-levels, and perhaps this was the starting point for the Atkinson enquiry. Nevertheless, the recommendations were far from drastic and their implementation was to be spread over the gentlemanly period of at least five years. After their fast growth over the past fifteen years or so, a review of East European studies was certainly needed.

When the Atkinson Report first appeared, the spectre of *dirigisme* was raised; it was only a taste of things to come. The smaller, less popular departments and colleges—even universities—became nervous. And when Atkinson was completed, Lord Flowers would not let all the medical schools in London bloom. Some years ago, however, Lord Wolfenden, then chairman of the University Grants Committee, managed to sort out Departments of Agriculture with a minimum of fuss.

Universities are jealous of their autonomy; dons believe in the importance of the subjects they teach. Both are useful working theories, and British academic life would be much impoverished without them. Both have now been challenged.

Universities are indeed special institutions, and every effort should be made to keep them that way. But they are especially vulnerable, because they are largely financed from one source, and the government can turn the financial tap on and off at will. Education in general, in the year up to March 1981, is the only sector of public spending which has shown an actual decrease (an estimated 2.9%). Eventually everybody, including soldiers (estimated increase on Defence is up by 8%), policemen (increase of 9.1% on Law & Order, etc.), and those who use up loans to nationalised industries (increase of 152.4%), is to be educated less well—or such appears to be the intention of the Government's unwise and philistine policy.

But perhaps the universities do have a small penance to perform. Many academics will remember the "post-Robbins" decade in the 1960s and early '70s as the best time of their lives. University expansion without end—large research-grants for large team-efforts to be had by anyone with an idea—senior appointments galore for junior academics. The number of solitary scholars, writing books or carrying out research in their own rooms or laboratories, probably did not proliferate as swiftly as the number of academics on committees, commissioning firms of architects to design new buildings, making new appointments, buying books rather than reading or writing them.

OUTLINES OF CHANGE are now taking shape behind the gloomy darkness. It may be that the change can assume some of the qualities of virtue. Students seem to have turned away from the less obvious injustices of our society towards the subjects of their chosen study. Younger academics appear more concerned about the choice of research projects than about invitations to sit on committees. With the cuts in most research funds, older academics have lost at least some of their former power of patronage.

In many places, the Atkinson Report was seen as a challenge to the autonomy of the universities. But if it was a disaster, it was a minor one in comparison with the new cuts in university grants to most universities, and maybe in the new general climate of decimation, the Atkinson Report will be easier to implement. Nevertheless, the UGC letter did contain useful hints concerning "minor" languages, recommending the preservation and improvement of research libraries, and suggesting that the teaching of these languages should not disappear from universities. The concept of "minor"

languages probably includes all East European languages—although, for a population as large and as highly educated as Britain's, under 20,000 French A-level passes a year might seem to include that language as well in the category of a minor educational enterprise.

It may be that, in language and area studies generally, a useful review of foreign language teaching at university level can be undertaken, and a more practical approach to teaching foreign languages considered. It certainly often seems to me that too little attention is paid to proficiency in the language itself. There exists a useful pool of skills and expertise in this country in areas such as teaching English as a foreign language, which could easily be applied to the task of teaching foreign languages to English speakers. This has been done very successfully in the past, when national servicemen were taught Russian in intensive courses.

THERE IS NO QUESTION in my mind that the University Grants Committee is well-intentioned, that it believes that universities are something special among man-made institutions, and that it is on their side. But it should invite the participation of the outside world in academic affairs, for outsiders often have a more detached and more generous view of the universities than one section of academics has of another. The Atkinson Report was the first report of its kind—there were others in 1918, 1947 and 1963—to be drafted by a committee consisting purely of academics. Although Professor Atkinson may have meant "concentration of resources" rather than contraction, his Report talks about retraining teachers of Russian, early retirement, and other devices. Uncertainty about how far this might go has probably worried university teachers of Russian and their professional organisations more than any other aspect of the Report. Concentration is another matter. Library and other research resources are easier to come by in the larger centres of East European studies; isolated scholars, the victims of the post-Hayter diaspora, have to fight harder to keep their research interests going than their more fortunate colleagues. But the Atkinson Report, because it attacked, or was seen to have attacked, a comparatively young profession, was usually opposed *in toto*.

The supply of students with A-levels in Russian is the cardinal problem. As long ago as 1962, the Annan Report suggested that the teaching of Russian at schools should be expanded to the level of the teaching of German. In 1978, there were 410 A-level passes in Russian and 6,429 in German. Compared with, say, the number of students in the Soviet Union reading English, 410 A-levels in Russian constitutes no less than a major educational scandal. In any case, not all of those

410 students go on to read for a degree in Russian studies. Universities are thus reduced to teaching Russian from scratch, and left to wonder whether it is the most efficient or economic way of teaching a language. Those 410 A-level students should be added to the next honours list.

Compared with French or German, Russian is a moderately difficult language. The best university students of Russian are usually absorbed into the academic profession, as teachers of Russian. It is generally true that departments which teach the more difficult languages tend to be dominated by specialists in the language and its literature, who in the main set the pattern of study. This fact of life is reflected in the professoriate at British universities. There are about 25 chairs occupied by professors who specialise in East European subjects. Of these, the majority (close on 20) are held by specialists in Russian language and literature. Specialists in East European history, economics, law, etc., proficient though they may be in East European languages, often find a more welcoming home in departments dealing with their basic discipline than in the departments of Russian, where there are no more than half-a-dozen professors in that line of business. A rationalisation of the structure of the profession, bringing it gradually into line with the structure of the subject studied, is long overdue.

IN TERMS OF university teaching and research on the Soviet Union, the non-Russian nationalities tend to be neglected.

Though the Russian language has gained some ground among the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union, the proportion of non-Russians has grown even faster. (The proportion of Russians in the Soviet Union had declined from 54.6% in the 1959 census to 52.3% in 1979; total population regarding Russian as their native tongue has gone down over the same period from 59.4% to 58.6%.) This demographic fact has remained virtually unacknowledged by British universities. In terms of university investment in the smaller East European countries, the situation is little better. The existence of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia is acknowledged by just one chair—the chair least likely to be filled if its present occupant (*absit omen!*) gets run over by the proverbial bus.

The resources invested in the study of Eastern Europe are tiny in comparison with the total expenditure on British universities, and it would be presumptuous in the present economic climate to claim a larger slice. The profession should certainly fight to maintain its present share of resources. But, while doing so, it should take a long look at itself, for "concentration of resources" is not a dirty concept merely because it is recommended by a Committee.

BOOKS & WRITERS

Auden & the Facts of Life

Biography & the Bedroom—By ALAN BROWNJOHN

HUMPHREY CARPENTER'S biography of W. H. Auden¹ is almost certainly destined to provide the definitive account of the poet's life for the foreseeable future. The author has worked with a high degree of support from Edward Mendelson, Auden's literary executor, has had free access to (and permission to quote from) unpublished letters and manuscripts, and has approached every relevant friend and associate of the poet. He has drawn out of the latter an abundance of hard evidence and a wealth of anecdotes which he allocates fastidiously to their sources in some invaluable appendices. The result is a comprehensive and meticulous Life, moving with assurance and a minimum of speculative interpretation through the well-defined stages of an absorbing, touching, and ultimately mysterious story. So it is all the more important to get at the heart of the residual uneasiness which accumulates as one reads on and watches the lonely and anguished man, until now half-concealed by the poetry, led out more and more fully into the light.

For some time now (the process began tentatively even before his death in 1973) the original broad outlines of Auden's career—political and English poet in the 1930s, religious and American poet in the '40s, Horatian autumn in New York, Vienna, and Oxford—have been gradually breaking down. With Carpenter's biography they vanish completely. He traces Auden's month-by-month activities and rapid changes of personal philosophy in the '30s so carefully that the political connection is now indisputably shown to have been extremely tenuous at best. Any Marxist revolution Auden envisaged would have had to be a psychological revolution, since the ills of society (consider those as Groddeck saw them, or Gerald Heard) were primarily matters of psychological rather than social decay. Auden was never remotely near to joining the Communist Party.

Similarly with his resumption of Christian beliefs in America in the 1940s: it was no simple question

of remembering the shut churches of Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, or falling among Protestant theologians in New York. Auden worked his way towards them through an elaborate self-catechism (the unpublished typescript has survived) in the mountains near Taos in July 1939. They owed something to Blake:

"... there are not 'good' and 'evil' existences. . . . Everything that is is holy. . . . Evil is not an existence but a state of disharmony between existences."

But they probably owed more to a new stability of personal existence, and a temporary happiness, in the honeymoon days of his relationship with Chester Kallman.

When this brief security abruptly disappeared with Kallman's sudden infidelity, Auden embarked on years of profound unhappiness; it was only alleviated by arriving at an understanding with Kallman that they could cohabit, and enter upon literary collaboration, on the basis of a strictly non-sexual relationship. The long years divided between Ischia, Greenwich Village, Kirchstetten, and Christ Church, when Auden presented a public face of contentment and delightfully eccentric habits, were years of private misery. Astonishingly, they are punctuated by one fully-fledged heterosexual affair (with Rhoda Jaffe) and two thoughts of conventional marriage, one of them with Hannah Arendt. For the sake of completeness and veracity, Carpenter is unsparing with all the private detail: the precise sexual preferences, the boys in America, Italy, and Austria.

AUDEN WAS quite well known enough by the mid-'30s for his personal decisions to seem publicly significant; it was a penalty of his early fame. In Carpenter's account, these public occasions (the visit to Spain in 1937, the choice of the United States during the Second World War) are shown to be something more like private confusions. On 12 January 1937, the *Daily Worker* was declaring: FAMOUS POET TO DRIVE AMBULANCE IN

¹ W. H. Auden: *A Biography*. By HUMPHREY CARPENTER. Allen & Unwin, £12.50.

SPAIN. But Auden was writing to E. R. Dodds about his going to Spain for the reason that "the poet must have direct knowledge of the major political events." Drive an ambulance he never did, and even Carpenter has been unable to discover exactly how Auden spent most of his time during the seven or eight weeks he spent there.

Much later Auden spoke of his shock and disillusion in Spain, but what Carpenter suggests is his disappointment at not finding a role: the Republicans had little sense of what to do with him while they had him. It is a penalty of high talent to have one's political uselessness laid bare; and the incident must surely have underlain his assertion in the unpublished Taos credo of 1939 that

"Artists and politicians would get along better in a time of crisis like the present, if the latter would only realise that the political history of the world would have been the same if not a poem had been written, not a picture painted nor a bar of music composed."

The decision to stay in the United States when war broke out was likewise interpreted as a public act. Carpenter tenaciously examines the facts and concludes that "Most probably he did not know his own mind." Perhaps his chief reason for remaining in America (as he told E. R. Dodds) was Chester Kallman. But he genuinely believed that the United States offered him more as a writer. And yet he went to the British Embassy and offered his services (they told him they only wanted technically qualified people back in Britain).

All this is a confusion from which only one certain fact emerges: Auden never lacked the courage to go where there was trouble, and it required nerve to stay in America as much as it would have done to return. Once more, public comment was not lacking; and Carpenter reprints (the irony is marked when one considers Auden's return to his Anglican roots, the taking of communion in the Episcopalian Church) the *Spectator* contribution of a famous and unspeakable cleric:

*"This Europe stinks", you cried—swift to desert
Your stricken country in her sore distress.
You may not care, but still I will assert
Since you have left us here, the stink is less.*

THE PERSONAL CONFUSIONS (and the private desperation) behind this kind of inevitably "public" decision may, perhaps, be quite legitimately examined by a biographer. There is a sense in which Auden's ambiguous involvement in major events in Spain or his muddled withdrawal from them in America were public choices; and if the consequences of fame are inescapable, the biographer of Auden should probably unearth and

interpret the facts, and establish an accurate and just record. But with the poetry itself—which is what truly matters—we are on different ground. Auden himself would probably have subscribed to the anonymous cleriheh which provides an appropriate text from another art:

*Biography
Is different from musicography:
Biography is about fellows,
Musicography is about cellos.*

Humphrey Carpenter quotes Auden's own dictum about biography:

"The biography of an artist, if his life as a man was sufficiently interesting, is permissible, provided that the biographer and his readers realise that such an account throws no light whatsoever upon the artist's work."

But he also adds Auden's subsequent statement from the same book (*Forewords and Afterwords*):

"I do believe, however, that, more often than most people realise, his works may throw light upon his life."

What is worrying in this biography is the handling of the balance between the two. Since the thorough biographer may find that the details about the life which it is possible to reveal in today's conditions could distract attention from the work, he will be aware that he has a difficult path to tread. Carpenter treads it with some care and sensitivity; yet it is only too possible to put down his book with the feeling that Auden's poetry has been unwittingly diminished.

THE TROUBLE IS, of course, the conscientious location of as many Auden poems as possible in the exact circumstances which account for them ("The affair prompted a couple of short lyrics that indicated the happiness Auden derived from it"). When the poems are unimportant, the references make no difference. When they are well known and more important, they are a distraction; and an accumulation of such distractions gradually leaves the impression that the poems are hardly more than a by-product of the life.

Some of the major Auden poems are not (perhaps cannot be) traced to their origins: so there is no discussion of, for example, "The Shield of Achilles" or "City Without Walls." In an early footnote Carpenter suggests a defence of his policy with the love poems, and commits a notable *non sequitur*:

"It has often been said, with justification, that Auden's love-poetry transcends the love-affairs which prompted it, and that it is a mistake to search too closely for the particular circumstances behind each poem. Nevertheless

Auden wrote, into Chester Kallman's copy of *Poems* (the 1934 American edition), in about 1939, the initials of some of the lovers or loved-ones who had prompted particular poems...."

Thus is a private act of confiding (perhaps subtle and ambiguous in its intention, therefore all the *more* private) converted into an implication that Auden might not have minded the specific association of many famous poems with the people, the places—even the nature of the sexual acts—which give rise to them. No published utterance of Auden about the relation of "the work" to "the life" would incline us to think that he would have been anything other than horrified at such a procedure, and contemptuous of the excuse for it.

Poetry is something shaped and refined with the precise intention of transcending the particular circumstances of its origin. It is quite possible that those circumstances, if revealed, may seem discreditable, or banal; the poem is the action which the poet wishes to be seen committing, and since it may suffer enough at the hands of the critics, it can do without any biographical annotation which is not essential to our understanding of the words on the page. Humphrey Carpenter's approach is certainly not "pornographic"; but Auden spotted the relevant point in an aphorism in *Epistle to a Godson*:

*Why is pornography boring? Because it can
never surprise us.
All of us know the few things Man as a
mammal can do.*

Once launched on the inexorable relation of Auden's poems to specific people and situations, Carpenter is committed to the repetitive recital of those "few things", and the poetry—for all his reverence and enjoyment—is reduced. Lists of boys had in Berlin are boring; whereas to turn the pages of *Poems* or *Look, Stranger* is to experience a richness and strangeness of which this biographer gives little or no indication.

THE "CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY" may have come to be shunned simply because it is so much harder to write than the "life" compiled on the principle that everything which is true, and happened, ought to be included; but it is a very desirable sort of balancing act if only a biographer can bring it off.

In the case of Auden, a "critical" account would have required a much more thorough integration of his finest poems into the life story: no conspicuous omissions (after all, the tetchy, dogmatic Auden who repeated his jokes, took seconal and benzedrine, and suffered from an anal fissure *did* write those poems); and an attempt really to appraise and illuminate the grandeurs and felicities

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of, for example, "The Sea and the Mirror" and "In Praise of Limestone", which here receive only brief summaries. This presupposes a critical sureness and nerve which Humphrey Carpenter does not have; his discussion of Auden's writings is always lucid and accurate, and frequently very helpful, but it is mainly rather ordinary. Yet space devoted to critical appraisal might have elbowed out some of the candid detail and delivered a life which actually substantiated the work.

For the reader who absorbs it side by side with the opened volumes of Auden's poems, the mass of detail in this book provides, all the same, a fascinating account of a creative life that was immensely poignant, and still puzzling. The sexually unhappy Auden wrote a poem shown only to a few friends—an admitted "piece of pornography"—called "The Platonic Blow" (that is, the ideal, imagined act of fellatio); inevitably it was published, against his wishes. From the time he settled in the United States, Auden appears to have set himself the vocation of establishing the Platonic Life: early rising, a long working day governed strictly by the clock, set and rigid hours for entertaining and relaxing, a host of petty rituals obsessively observed (woe betide those who contravened them), and an early bedtime. He thus created an almost impenetrably eccentric version of himself, and lived by it, in the effort to shut out the agonies which did not fit the ideal. He failed in this effort by much more than just letting his physical circumstances collapse into spectacular disorder, a chaos of books, bottles,

cigarette ends and dirt. The profoundest, and most enigmatic, weakness in the scheme was his inability (or lack of final desire) to shape these routines, with the aid of a permanent and satisfying relationship, into what he thought he most ardently wanted: a home.

The private misery of the entire second half of his life may be roughly and readily explained by the lack of a settled and fulfilling "marriage" with Chester Kallman: a moderate happiness during the summer months in Kirchstetten was invariably broken by Kallman's departure to Athens in the winter, when Auden returned to New York. But what stays unexplained (perhaps it will always be inexplicable) is Auden's failure to make any other relationship which would supply the emotional security he needed. Understanding Auden will continue to be a matter of fathoming that most mysterious connection between the heart-rending existence of the eccentric who dined out in carpet slippers and Tolkien sweater, and left at nine o'clock for seasonal, vodka, and bed—and the genius who actually enacted the Platonic Life in his poems.

Let him have the last, paradoxical word on all this in a marvellous poem to which this biography makes only one passing, three-line reference, "The Cave of Making." The poet's working room is

*an antre
more private than a bedroom even, for neither
lovers nor maids are welcome, but without a
bedroom's secrets. . . .*

Turrets & T-Squares

A Victorian Architect—By GEORGE MACBETH

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, when we were buying our van Gogh prints, the adjective "Victorian" was almost invariably followed by a noun like "monstrosity", and the sort of work to which this description would be applied was precisely the *oeuvre* of William Burges, the subject of J. Mordaunt Crook's absorbing and magisterial new book.¹

To have been such a well-defined target, albeit one more frequently recognised than named, is a measure of the centrality and genius of Burges. Now that the wheel has come full circle, and the Victorians have returned in their glory, crinolines, crockets and all, Burges is in danger of entering the

same expanded pantheon as Charles Voysey and Christopher Dresser—a broad plateau of praise where once only Robert Adam ruled, and John Nash took chocolate with John Soane in neo-classical raffishness. This over-appreciation could be a pity. Burges is an architect of high gifts, but one with manifest weaknesses, and to some extent he shares both of these with the best mainstream artists of his age. The time has come for a cooler look at Victorian richness, and the centenary of Burges's death (and his rival G. E. Street's, for that matter) offers a good opportunity for some reassessment.

Appreciation of an architect, of course, and particularly a Victorian architect, whose work may be poorly documented in easily accessible books, may depend very much on where one lives. As a

¹ *William Burges, and the High Victorian Dream*. By J. MORDAUNT CROOK. John Murray, £40.00.

child brought up in Yorkshire, I had good opportunities to admire the outstanding North Country honesty and verve of Cuthbert Brodrick's Leeds Town Hall and Grand Hotel at Scarborough, two of the best 19th-century buildings in the county, and ones not enough praised perhaps in the south (where Brodrick's name can get misspelled even in a book as good as Mr Crook's). For Londoners, the fertile productivity of Sir George Gilbert Scott and Alfred Waterhouse—observed, alas, for too many years with appalled horror—has never been in question. St Pancras Station and the Natural History Museum are always with us. Too many great Victorian architects, though, must be studied rather far from home, if home is the metropolis. For Pearson, you have to go to Truro; for Burges, to Wales.

There they rise in the West, his cardboard bastions at Cardiff and Castell Coch, so like the toy forts of one's childhood, waiting only to be peopled with lifesize equivalents of Chesterton's lead soldiers. They offer little to the casual tourist, whoring after his cream tea or his Kent ceilings. They require a day-by-day acquaintance, revealing their hidden powers only to the local, and more wildly Celtic, eye.

Who was this William Burges, then, gothiciser and medievalist *extraordinaire*? Mr Crook's immense and fearsomely priced book enables us for the first time to understand the genesis of his style, the intentions of his work, and all of its main memorials. But it leaves us very much in the dark about the secret undersprings of his art, the inner drives of a quirky mid-Victorian who died in middle age, never married, and indulged a taste for evenings at the *Judge and Jury*, a notorious club where girls stripped to their underclothes enacted parodies of famous trials for an audience of drunken guardees and awed pre-Raphaelites.

MR CROOK's delicate method may suggest a pleasing reticence in an age of psychologising biography, but it does whet a salacious appetite for more background to, for example, the Dunedin crozier, that erotic masterpiece where a mailed St George shyly forces a short sword down the yawning throat of a supple dragon whirling like a firework from the buttocks of a young girl bound with ropes. There is iconography here of a Freudian as well as a Christian kind. One wonders what exactly did go on with those half-nude wenches after the tableaux. Intriguingly enough, Burges later sold his drawings for the crozier to a French magazine as a 13th-century original, and in due course they became accepted, to the disgust of Handley-Read, as the genuine article. Perhaps for Burges it was more than a schoolboy prank, like having corks painted in the stained glass for Cork

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"A splendidly lively invention... so entertaining."

Anthony Thwaite, Observer

"... a long, wonderfully detailed, lovingly reconstructed picture of a particular society and an individual sensibility... its excellence... puts Michael Moorcock straight into the front rank of contemporary English novelists."

Robert Nye, Guardian
£6.95

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Cathedral. Perhaps it was a wry bid for medieval sanction, some sort of holy licence for the banked fires of his own lust.

Usually the undertones of sexuality in his work are more anal, as in the squatting massiveness of the Ricketts Monument in Kensal Green Cemetery, or those pulpits and fonts where stubby columns rear a precious bottom above potentially damaging tiles or mosaic. It seems oddly appropriate that this most costive of architects should have designed a lavatory for an eccentric patron who believed his backside was made of glass. This charming beehive (at Gayhurst, Buckinghamshire) may well have been condensed out of the slightly earlier game larder by S. S. Teulon at Shadwell Park, in Norfolk. But it has far more zip and "go" (though Burges despised this quality) than its antecedent.

Architectural history is full of this kind of copying, and Mr Crook is fecund in examples, charting the provenance of voussoir and corbel with the zeal of a basset-hound on the track of marijuana. The research is awe-inspiring, but such detail occasionally—as in Burges's mantels and arches—causes the structure to seem to wheeze and stoop. Mr Crook is aware of this danger, and quotes it as a general threat in handling the Victorian age, about which we know almost too much, but there are moments when he succumbs. Prodigious work is done in the assemblage of foreign sources and quotations in all the churches, but the list of sponsors for Burges's belated election to the Athenaeum is elaborated beyond all usefulness. Do we really need to know that one was "a suicidal melancholic enthusiast for church and empire, colonies and cricket, and a champion chess-player who translated Tennyson's 'Lotos Eaters' into Greek"? This is surely the sort of over-packing every rift with ore to which Burges himself is far too prone. It thus mimics without elucidating, as onanistic as its original.

Leaving sexual metaphor aside, though (and perhaps, after all, there is, as with Lord Leighton, too little evidence for sex to be of much help in interpreting the core of Burges's obsessions with compression and density), there are other, less loaded, tools with which his style can be analysed. A useful hint might be drawn from Roderick Gradidge, in his fine book *Dream Houses*,² when he suggests an affinity of mood between that hierophant of imperial decline, Sir Edwin Lutyens, and his progenitor and compatriot, Rudyard Kipling.

CURIOUSLY, THE CRITICS of Victorian literature have been quicker to sort out the pecking order than their colleagues in the visual arts. Tennyson and Browning tower in agreed, if grudging,

splendour. Scott and Butterfield still totter on their clandestine iron. So perhaps the yardstick of literary tone and quality, with its firmer markings, can be applied to architecture with some hope of finding parallels. For Burges, who might these be?

Despite their friendship, there is little to connect him, if we seek a common approach to form and ornament, with the gilded similes and the lulling rhythms of Dante Gabriel Rossetti; more, perhaps, with the rugged verse of George Meredith, that haunted cuckold who posed for the wasted youth in Henry Wallis's *Death of Chatterton*, and wrenched English to a bizarre weightiness in the wading stanzas of *King Harald's Trance*; most of all, one might think, with his innovating junior, the tormented Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins. Would it seem too far-fetched to find the same "belligerence of genius" (as Mr Crook calls it) in the pungency and guts of the East Front at Studley Royal as in, say, the strenuous passion of the sextet to "Felix Randal", or the opening stanzas of "The Wreck of The Deutschland"?

Well, yes, actually, it would. Architecture (the "keystone of the arts", as Pausanias of Ceos once claimed and Ruskin did more, perhaps, than any other Victorian to confirm) is nevertheless its own master, *sui generis*. Buildings profit most from being seen in the context of other buildings, and Mr Crook is wisely sparing in his lateral comparisons. His own magnificent book supplies us, as surely as Christopher Ricks's edition of Tennyson, with the materials for whatever speculative judgments we might wish to embark on. But it also, while holding back from such judgments, inevitably urges the reader towards them. Would a final chapter comparing Burges with, say, Scott and Street have really been too unscholarly? The temptation to supply notes towards such a chapter is scarcely one the reviewer should be expected to resist.

WHAT IS IT, THEN, that most closely links Burges with, and ultimately differentiates him from, these fellow Goths of his in the 1860s and '70s? Mr Crook puts his finger on it, I think, in two insights which he fails to develop as far as he might. The first of these insights hints at a reason for the massive clutter of décor so widely admired from Pugin to Norman Shaw. In the 19th century, the atmosphere of London, and, for that matter, of all the big industrial cities, was intensely polluted by fog, so that visibility was reduced, often, to a few yards. (Even in the 1950s, I remember seeing passengers walking in front of cars in one particularly thick pea-souper, so that they could act as forward eyes for the drivers.) This universal Victorian miasma (the symbolic backcloth for Jack the Ripper in the 1890s) must have helped to focus attention on what was close, and thus to invite the

² *Dream Houses: The Edwardian Ideal*. By RODERICK GRADIDGE. Constable, £12.50.

accentuation of local ornament at the expense of form. One could easily criticise a host of great Victorian monuments along these lines, from the Albert Memorial downwards. The wood is very hard to see for the trees.

In the case of Burges, this tendency can sometimes move very close to caricature, as in the Arab Room at Cardiff Castle, for example, or the bizarre elephant ink-stand that stood on the desk at Tower House in Melbury Road. Mr Crook aptly points to a likely reason for this excess. Just as El Greco's elongated figures may be the aesthetic consequence of a distorted retina, so Burges's hectic and swollen minutiae could stem from his acute myopia. Burges was clearly very short-sighted indeed. At a garden party, he once mistook a peacock for a man, to whom he raised his hat. He once failed to recognise the girl he hoped to marry, at a ball.

This focusing on what was near may have underlined a variety of prejudices—including, for example, a rather manic insistence on the sort of rough, unseductive kind of architectural drawing he saw as epitomised by the work of the 13th-century linear artist Wilars de Honecourt. All cross-hatching and perspective treatments were regarded by Burges as downright misleading, and sometimes tending to suggest an appearance more alluring than the architect's building might offer when actually constructed. Nevertheless, Burges did consistently titillate the expectations of his own clients with very elegant three-dimensional views designed by Axel Haig. There is inconsistency here, but of a typically Victorian kind. The 19th century was an age very tolerant of contradiction.

The essence of Burges's intellectual position was an emphasis on professional integrity in draughtsmanship, on showing something that was fundamentally based on measurement, and not on the airy dream in the architect's imagination. But, of course, the finished building—complete with garden, climate and users—would, in some sense, always have to exist in the projecting mind, and the absence of a clear concept could sometimes lead to a muddled or fussy final product, as in the unfortunate compromise of the Speech Room for Harrow School. The stressing of what could be reached and touched, essentially with a steel tape or a T-square, forced Burges to reduce the far boundaries of the world to the few feet normally noticed by a man wearing very thick lenses, and this proved, at times, his downfall.

One could go too far with a literal elaboration of this. But the sheer ugliness (in my view) of a work such as the grotesque decanter made for James Nicholson, which is chosen as the back-jacket illustration for Mr Crook's book, is of the sort an uninformed observer might guess had been achieved by an extraordinarily talented craftsman who was virtually blind. It was made, of course, by the (no doubt) hawk-eyed R. A. Green, but with

complete faithfulness to Burges's aggressive design, as were the companion pieces constructed with such obsessive skill by Barkentin and Krall. The yoking together of disparate materials here—the head of an oryx, a winged leopard with its tail between its legs, a Roman profile, a wickerwork turret—this process of brutal jamming verges on the surreal. Its justification seems to become clear only when one imagines a sensitive hand, feeling its way with tender and responsive care, adoring every nuggety projection and recessed ornament. There is nothing offered to the eye except shock and surprise: but the work is a complex feast for the unseeing finger—an icy, eternal, and rewarding touchstone.

UGLY AS THEY ARE in a visual sense, these little objects made for a relationship of domestic closeness, a tactile intimacy, are perhaps the high spot, if not the central core, of Burges's work. His giant spires and arches resolve themselves into the overblown dream of a jeweller. For a full enjoyment, they would need to be peered at, and fondled over. These are the Braille virtues of the cluster-loving Gallé, or the sinuous Tiffany, rather than the hieratic Pugin—and perhaps it is finally to his heirs and successors, the symbolists and the craftsmen of art nouveau, that Burges is ultimately to be compared.

Edith Sitwell

A UNICORN AMONG LIONS

Victoria Glendinning

'A sensitive, excellently structured biography . . . this sympathetic yet objective work . . . conforms to Robert Gitting's definition of what the best biography should be: "Poetry with a conscience." — Michael Holroyd, New York Times Book Review.

Weidenfeld & Nicolson

He would not necessarily have disliked this. The perky humour of William de Morgan, for example, not least in his *outré* tiled animals, would surely have appealed to the author of the Dog Cabinet, and would have struck him as the natural incumbent of his own fairytale sense of fantasy. Certainly, as Burges aged, the high Victorian dream was beginning to lapse, slowly but inexorably, into its own baroque decline, the weird languor of Burne-Jones contorting towards the warped fetuses of Aubrey Beardsley. More swiftly, alas, the same thing was happening to Burges. He died, oddly and suddenly, after catching a cold in a dog-cart.

Curiously enough, the d'Annunzian clutter of Burges's private collections was dispersed, by auction, through some famous and appreciative hands. John Betjeman presented the Narcissus washstand to Evelyn Waugh and in due course (not surprisingly, we modern purists might think) its convulsive

detail became part of the ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold. Even the Tower House has come to rest, for the time at least, with a flourish of heavy metal glamour. In 1974 it was bought by Jimmy Page, of *Led Zeppelin* fame, outbidding David Bowie. It used to be the world of Cecil B. De Mille and the Hollywood epic that benefited from the high Victorian dream, the pillared vision of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema and John Martin. Since the 1960s it has been the stars of rock-and-roll who have entered that cloudy, opiate heaven where Tennyson mixes with Chaucer, and the Marquess of Bute, his greatest patron, shakes hands with the high priest of eclecticism, the most amazing wizard of them all, William Burges. But the price, inevitably, has changed. In 1933, the Vita Nuova washstand sold for £17. In 1974, the Tower House cost £350,000. But then, Billy Burges would have liked that, too. He was always an expensive architect.

Wrestling with the Difficult

New Poetry—By LAURENCE LERNER

T. S. ELIOT, as every schoolboy now knows, told us that modern poetry, if it is to encompass the complexity of the modern world, needs to be difficult; and the modern poets have heard him and obeyed. How is the reader to receive a difficult poem? It all depends, surely, on the circumstances. Sitting in a seminar with his tutor, the reader will find difficulty appropriate: it gives them so much to discuss. Hearing the poet read the poem, intensely and (perhaps) with a few words of comment, we can be swept along into a response that will lead to understanding.

But the poetry reviewer, sitting in his study, pondering all those gnomic pages, may find himself less tolerant of obscurity: to read through 25 volumes of new poetry in the hope of singling out the half-dozen worth recommending, the one or two that may one day be discussed in seminars, produces—in this reviewer at any rate—a hunger for clarity. Among all the poems that conceal their meanings between layers of abstraction like a prude concealing her nakedness under layers of flannel, desire grows intense for poems that will strip naked, enjoy the language of their bodies, lie down and offer you their meanings. Should the reviewer give in to this longing?

Take, for instance, Peter Porter. He is known as

a witty, serious, astringent poet: *English Subtitles*¹ sounds like a series of memorable, perhaps satiric, comments on a bewildering world. But many of these poems mime the bewilderment they might be expected to clarify, and could do with a few subtitles themselves: Porter, though no one can doubt his intelligence or his integrity, has become a less accessible and (in consequence) less attractive poet than he was. As self-conscious as anyone, he knows this, and it is the subject of several of the poems. He is, as he tells us, “A Philosopher of Captions”:

*No person from this liner-browed brain
Will reach the height of those grave captains
Whose Dantesque walk and Homeric facing
Still flare on our desolate concrete plain.*

True, but a poem cannot live only on its statements of what it's not doing, except as a rhetorical device for doing it after all, which is not Porter's purpose here. So the second stanza describes the “special authenticity” that he offers, and the struggles to achieve it:

*Here space a fear and there placate a pun,
Or adjudicate through childhood, one noun
Up and another down, with everything a fiction.*

That is Porter's “intolerable wrestle with words and meanings.” One always respects a poet for that, but what is the point of “adjudicate through

¹ *English Subtitles*. By PETER PORTER. Oxford University Press, £3.50.

childhood"? A very similar poem begins:

*Nobody feels well after his fortieth birthday
But the convalescence is touched by glory,*

making it clear that the problems of writing are now, for him, like the problems of ageing: there are no Songs of Innocence in Porter. He is caught between the celebratory splendour he inherits from the great masters, and his sense that "imagination is bureaucratised." Not only the Homeric facing but his own anarchic impulses tempt him one way—those hours

*When the timid rule of truth relents
And every written word is without sense
As in some ultimate avant-gardish shape;*

but set against this is a sober awareness that his task is to "turn the more uncomfortable passions / Into slim sentences", that we inhabit a garden of earthly delights that depends for beauty, even for meaning, on repression and sublimation, on what he wittily calls, even in nature, the need for foreplay:

*Our bourgeois duty is to make gods,
Expensive ghosts to act for sex. . . .*

The middle-aged poet is left with the ordinary for his subject-matter, and self-consciousness as his method. The result is a series of poems that leave me often puzzled, usually impressed, but only occasionally delighted. In a poem about settling for the ordinary much will depend on the ending, and a comparison of endings can be revealing:

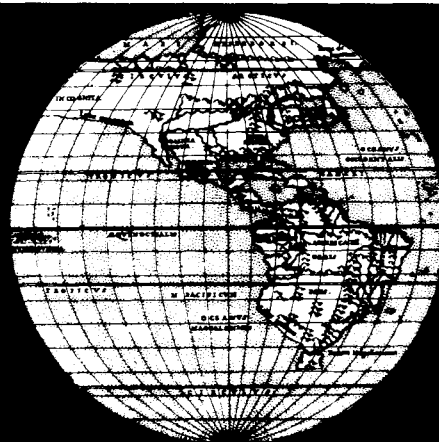
*Embarrassment abounds
That pain is the one immortal gift of our steward-
ship
"A Philosopher of Captions"*

*He has learned how
To live another day, and wakes, ringed
By the golden wallpaper of the sun.
"Returning"*

*Pavilions of self-love
Adorn the grass; and here you must build.
"Garden of Earthly Delights"*

The least successful, surely, is the first: the admission of embarrassment is itself embarrassing, and the poem sounds too like a mere defeat. The end of "Returning", in contrast, has found a superb image for the blending of ordinariness and beauty. The last is less brilliant, but memorable too, and perhaps equally impressive in the quiet dignity of its rhythm.

ASK MOST PEOPLE who know something of Donald Davie what sort of poet he is, and the most likely word you will get is "academic." That



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he teaches in a university is hardly sufficient cause for the description: so many poets do. The clarity and vigour (those academic virtues) of Davie's critical prose is so utterly different from the often haunting, often elliptical, sometimes obscure poems he writes, as to make him in some ways very unacademic. He is a poet of contradictions—a rhetorician who has absorbed the anti-rhetorical prejudices of modernism, a cool, urbane, stylist with touches of plangent music, a very personal and a very impersonal poet.

His latest volume² is a reissue of *The Shires* (not, surely, one of his successes) preceded by a haunting new sequence called "Three for Water-Music", in which he is at his most eloquent, his most moving, and also his most puzzling. Two of the three poems arise out of visits to sites in Sicily that are associated with Greek mythology, and between them is a reflection on the state of England and his own childhood, called "Wild Boar Clough", which has so far, to me, remained fragmentary and unimpressive. But one perseveres with a difficult poem if one is offered signs of the poet's power, and the other two, especially the first, "The Fountain of Cyanë", are truly impressive.

Cyanë, in case you haven't been browsing in your Ovid lately, was one of Proserpine's nymphs, who tried to prevent Pluto from carrying her off to the underworld, and when she had failed dissolved into tears so completely that she turned into a spring. Davie's poem on her has five sections. The first, in splendidly rhetorical couplets, compares the sordidness of rape's actuality with the transfiguring effect of turning it into poetry:

*Coloured by rhetoric, to die of grief
Becomes as graceful as a falling leaf.*

The second records his response to the calm ordinariness of the pool of Cyanë, not the "vertiginous landscape" one might expect for that "first most seminal rape", but instead

*Wholly a female occasion
This, as Demeter launches
One fish in a silver arc
To signalize her daughter's
Re-entry to the dark.*

This leads to a scrupulous meditation on the relation between epiphany, the glimpsing of a vision, and formality, control, enclosure—whether the enclosing of the pool as a shrine, or the formality of regular rhyme and metre. It is a delicate relation, and one on which Davie has been reflecting all his life: epiphanies

² *Three for Water-Music*. By DONALD DAVIE. Carcanet New Press, £2.95.

³ *Poems 1955–1980*. By ROY FISHER. Oxford University Press, £7.95.

*like the closed-off
Precincts all right, but never
When those exult in their closures.*

This section is metrically impeccable, but, with careful and appropriate tact, never quite rhymes.

The final section, in strict lyric stanzas, compares the tremendous story of the myth with the "less than happening" of his visit to the pool. A fish jumped, no more: is that enough to "suffuse / Our lives with happiness"? If this is academic, it is so in the old-fashioned sense that it is the work of a learned man. The learning is conveyed but also questioned, just as the writing is immediate but also elliptical, for Davie is soaked in modernism. Lyric and formal modes hold constant traffic with the everyday and the colloquial. Here is a poem that strips itself naked, but with exquisite modesty.

ROY FISHER provides a different kind of difficulty. His commitment to modernism and to post-modernism, says the blurb of his *Poems 1955–1980*,³ has isolated him from the mainstream of British poetry; and sure enough the poems are full of "the perceptual experimentation and formal artifice of European modernism", to the point, over and over again, of total incomprehensibility. Let us approach Fisher through his more accessible work, which in his case means the earliest. Here is the third poem in the book, called "Linear":

*To travel and feel
the world growing old on your body

breathe and excrete
perpetually the erosion that makes the world*

*a caravan the little city
that has the wit to cross a continent*

*so patiently it cannot help but see
how each day's dust lay and shifted and lies* again

*no forgotten miles or kinks
in the journey other than cunning ones*

*to pass through many things acquisitively
and touch against many more*

*a long line without anything
you could call repetition*

*always through eroded
country amused by others and other worlds*

*a line like certain snail tracks
crazily long and determined.*

There is verbal talent here, certainly: to write "the world growing old on your body" instead of the

other way round is to give the impression of knowing what you are doing. The poise is obvious; but if the poem knows what it is doing, it is not anxious to pass the knowledge on to us. Donald Davie, who has written a helpful essay on Fisher, speaks of the early poems as defiant apologies for abandoning traditional forms, and claims that "the alternative open forms . . . are finely justified in . . . 'Linear'."

I find I can read the poem in two ways. On the one hand, that caravan may represent the plodding ordinariness of traditional writing, seeing only dust, governed by the acquisitiveness of a bourgeois society that buys instead of looking, touching against things it does not really feel, sticking to the eroded parts of the earth, missing the amusement; the title then refers to the linear thinking we need to shed. Or the title can be an image for the patient, sensitive caravan that treats even our well-worn world with reverence, that has the wit to achieve vast distances, the patience of poetry, a crazy and splendid persistence. The normal signposts that would enable us to resolve such ambiguities are not present, for the poem is carefully free of syntax: it is a long infinitive phrase, left hanging without the guidance of a main verb. The standard reply to this is that modern poetry does not deal in prose statement, that the experience of being left in such uncertainty is precisely the poetic experience aimed for; but that defence is not compatible with Davie's

claim (which I suspect to be correct) that the poem *justifies* something, or that its neighbouring poem is an *apology*. There are ambiguities and ambiguities, and this does not sound to me like the suggestive ambiguity of open-endedness, or the brilliant Empsonian ambiguity of (say) "has the wit"; it sounds more like the teasing of someone who tells you that he is making a statement and then inaudibly swallows the crucial words.

What I am complaining of is, of course, not Roy Fisher's talent, but the kind of poetry he writes. If we read his most accessible long work, "City", as a descriptive poem by a sharp modern urban sensibility, a piece of reportage with verbal inventiveness ("the sun hacks at the slaughterhouse campanile"), it can be seen as unpretentious, urgent, even brilliant; but there are a score or more of poems here that seem simply to have put up "No Entry" signs.

AND WHAT OF the straightforward poets, those untouched, or only mildly touched, by the obscurity that modernism has tried to make obligatory? There are plenty of them, mostly from the little presses, many of them amateurish, most of them (one feels) nice people, and one or two famous names among them. Is it only snobbery that makes

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ANDRE DEUTSCH

one feel they are not to be taken as seriously as the Difficult Ones? To represent them, let us look at two poets in their fifties, one little-known, the other well-known.

Gerda Mayer's tiny poems in *Monkey on the Analyst's Couch*⁴ are cool, witty, sometimes on the edge of nursery rhymes (she also writes for children), and often on very big subjects. Here is "Bang":

*When the goodies are all gone
what shall we do
with the old brown bag of an earth
but blow it up—BANG.*

*Crumpled brown paper bag
scuttling along
the desolate white
lanes of the universe*

There is nothing to say about that. Its economy may seem to you easy or (as it does to me) beautifully effective. There aren't many words in this slim volume, but they are all attractive, and it is pleasant to see the Poetry Book Society recommending it in preference to more famous names.

DAVID HOLBROOK has been writing for years, almost exclusively about himself and his family. He quarrels with his wife, they have a new baby, they go on holiday together: it adds up virtually to a narrative sequence, so that we turn the pages of *Selected Poems*⁵ to find out if his wife has had another fit of dress-making, or if Tom has gone to school yet. Why, it's the subject matter of all the amateur poets of Tunbridge Wells, the dear old ladies with their grandchildren. Perhaps there's something to be said for modernism and obscurity after all, for Holbrook can be as pedestrian as any amateur:

*"We'll have to leave out all that early stuff."
So, Giotto, and the Sienese Trecento
Are sacrificed to our need to be through by
lunch-time.*

But of course Holbrook can be a far better poet than this. At his best he records his changing moods—solicitous, bullying, lecherous, affectionate, agonised—with honesty and a fine control of tone. "Poor Old Horse", for instance, the first and best-known poem in the book, gets its tone just right:

*I see the spring love on the bridge for her: for me
decay,*

⁴ *Monkey on the Analyst's Couch*. By GERDA MAYER. Ceolfrith Press (27 Stockton Road, Sunderland SR2 7AQ). £2.50.

⁵ *Selected Poems*. By DAVID HOLBROOK. Anvil Press, £5.95.

*Or at most the wry pretension, "Well, we have
had our day!"*

*I do not want to have had my day: I do not
accept my jade,
Any more than the grey old horse we met in the
street,
His shaggy stiff dragged aside for a smart sports
blade*

And his smart sports car. . . .

Yet the fact that the best-known poem is also the earliest is significant. It is not simply that the whirligig of taste has left a poet of the early '60s behind; all the best poems come at the beginning, and perhaps now Holbrook looks like a poet who has not developed enough to remain really interesting.

JOHN WAIN is pretty accessible too, but certainly not because he is amateur or unsophisticated. He began in the 1950s as—surely—the most typical of the Movement poets, cool, carefully witty, lucid, self-conscious. There he is, reading love poetry in a dentist's waiting room, and writing a poem about it beginning "waiting for pain I read about their joy", with puns on "drill", and ending with the hope that

*they did not breathe their vows in vain,
Nor ever found a cure for their condition.*

The level *terza rima* of these early poems seems dated now, yet out of it Wain has developed a colloquial manner that modulates with great skill into the formal or the intense. He has absorbed modernism, but subordinates it to a totally unforced commitment to communicating, a sort of chronic inability to be obscure. He and Holbrook are the two most self-centred poets in the bunch; and of the two Holbrook emerges as perhaps the more self-critical but that, as we all, alas, know, is no guarantee of poetic merit, and the way Wain leaves his subjects, to talk about himself, conveys a poetic vitality that Holbrook can rarely manage.

Wain is at his fluent best in the introductory poem to "Letters to Five Artists", where he combines (not very intricately) Ovid's reflections on being sent into exile with those of a modern poet at an airport, the faintly absurd Dogrose, plus some reading about Red Indians, and reminiscences of his father as a boy. Wain's Ovid differs from Davie's more or less as the authors differ from each other: he is more garrulous, less obsessed with mythology, worried about his comfort, and a master of wry introspection. Wain distinguishes him from Dogrose by means of the two forms of banishment in ancient Rome, *relegatio* and *exsilium*—a very neatly used bit of learning. The

introductory poem of *Wildtrack* is equally derivative from other poetry, this time from Alexander Blok's "The Twelve", of which we're given a free version with commentary incorporated—something Wain does very well.

*Poems 1949–1979*⁶ is arranged backwards, and so begins with what Wain has been writing recently. He seems in the last decade to have been in his best form, and the opening poem, "Visiting an Old Poet", is a splendid cumulative meditation, occasionally too self-conscious about its changes of tone, but with something new and lively on every page. The old poet is clearly a fictitious or composite figure, so there is no gossip interest: it is a poem about the body and the soul, about the life of the artist, and about the world we live in.

TWO POETS who are already well known have just brought out their first volumes with leading publishers. Predictably, a good deal of Penelope Shuttle's *The Orchard Upstairs*⁷ is about menstruation and pregnancy. Is it good for poetry, this frankness which would so have astonished our grandmothers? One thing is certain, the simple-minded Freudian view that repression and concealment are the source of symbolism (does anyone still believe that?) is nonsense: the extremely unrepresed Ms Shuttle throws symbol after symbol at us—"blood manuscripts", "blind red lizard", "night bird of red" follow each other in three short lines.

Such a flurry of scarlet imagery soon palls, and there are times when her concern with bodily processes seems to parody itself: "I dreamt, two weeks ago, / Of the bloody holy hole" is surely on the edge of the ludicrous—or is it? Can a man know? I am strengthened in my feeling by the fact that Gerda Mayer shares it; after collecting an endless list of images of blood from women's poems, she writes a reply called "Drip Drip or Not Bloody Likely", which ends:

*Blood is a curse
I don't
Let it slop over my verse.*

All this has to be said, to establish that frankness and intimacy are not a short cut to poetry; but no more are they a barrier to it, and Penelope Shuttle can write of her own body with moving power—of "the pain counting its stitches across me", or of the bewilderments of fatigue when

*Pages I try to read are dark charcoal maps
too smudged to see the paths.*

⁶ *Poems 1949–1979*. By JOHN WAIN. Macmillan, £9.95.

⁷ *The Orchard Upstairs*. By PENELOPE SHUTTLE. Oxford University Press, £3.95.

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Some of the shorter poems, with no connection (or no obvious connection) with bodily processes, are little gems: "Cupboard Hyacinths", "Honesty", perhaps also "The Silver Bridge." These are very traditional feminine poems, gaining something, perhaps, from their place among all the frankness, but perfectly self-sufficient; some of the images for rain and snow are marvellous:

Roses shudder, even the limbs of trees ache . . .

*Through the letter box, leaves instead of letters,
Wet leaves blown along the path
and seeping through the low letter box. . .*

FOR SUSTAINED POETIC POWER, however, give me David Sweetman's *Looking into the Deep End*.⁸ Faber have picked a real winner in him. His verbal brilliance is a source of constant delight: on the beach "sandworms put out spaghetti for the neighbours / though no one eats"; the lifeboat tracks go "into the water, tramlines to Atlantis"; "the hot tap has a cold, / while ice cubes boil over in the fridge." Sweetman is clearly one of Craig Raine's Martians, seeing the world anew through metaphor and feigned ignorance. Inevitably, the danger in this is that of over-writing:

*By the gate, sacks of rubbish with gathered ruffs
squat like so many sad pagliacci,
their pierrot smocks sagging
under the weight of expended happiness.*

That first line is so brilliant that it should be left alone, and the poet's inability to do so begins to look self-congratulatory: *pagliacci* in particular is a piece of show-off. Yet lapses like this are a small price to pay for so much verbal delight.

At the same time, like Craig Raine, he tackles the big subjects. He is constantly concerned with violence and what it does to our world, and his brilliant images take on a frightening power when the subject too is frightening. A shot

*pins a rose on a man's shirt
Which he cups to him like a gentle secret.*

That clash of language against subject could hardly be bettered; and it extends to a whole poem in "The Art of Pottery 1945", in which a Japanese potter is killed by the atomic bomb, and

*his shadow settles on the nearest bowl,
with the merest stroke, almost a letter,
the beginnings of a haiku perhaps
or the fringe of a wave by Hiroshige. . .*

The worse the violence, the greater the gentleness: outrageous, but outrageously right.

ENGLISH POETRY can easily be insular, in these monoglot days; so I am glad to conclude with two major foreign talents, just out in English. Joseph Brodsky is a Russian of the newer generation (born 1940: exiled 1972) who has virtually become an American poet. A galaxy of talent (Anthony Hecht, Derek Walcott, Richard Wilbur, many others) has translated his poems, often with his collaboration: how much of the brilliance, one wonders, comes from the original, how much from the translators?—and how much of the over-ingenuity, or of the limp rhythms? Brodsky can be a Martian too:

*And a ray of the moon, meanwhile,
Draws up the tide like a slipping blanket.*

He is the best illustration here of Eliot's view about difficulty, for he derives, more perhaps than any Englishman now writing, from Donne and the metaphysicals, whose work (alone among modern Russian poets?) he knows well; at the same time he is a true modernist, the heir of Blok and Anna Akhmatova. He writes about the modern world and the large international subjects; yet he is also capable of the exquisitely irresponsible formality of "The Butterfly", a tour-de-force of true preciousness, full of a kind of metaphysical probing ("And tell me, please, what pattern / inspired this scene?") to which there are no answers. But there are analogies, and in particular the analogy with writing: the "sliding pen", like the butterfly, has no sense of purpose, and therefore "trusts the hand"

*whose spasm reaps no pollen
but eases hearts.*

It is a 17th-century gem of lyric intricacy, written with a modern sensibility; and it makes an astonishing counterweight (no, not counterweight, for the poem is as light as the butterfly) to the title poem, a long sequence of meditations on his own life and exile, uneven in quality but murkily powerful, and at times suddenly, frighteningly political:

*. . . and when "the future" is uttered, swarms of
mice
rush out of the Russian language and gnaw a
piece*

*of ripened memory which is twice
as hole-ridden as real cheese.*

A *Part of Speech*⁹ needs more digesting than a reviewer is allowed, to say nothing of a knowledge of Russian; but the preliminary report which is all I can offer is that Brodsky's talent seems immense.

FINALLY, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who has written a hotch-potch on *The Sinking of the*

⁸ *Looking into the Deep End*. By DAVID SWEETMAN. Faber, £3.00.

⁹ *A Part of Speech*. By JOSEPH BRODSKY. Oxford University Press, £4.95.

*Titanic*¹⁰ and translated it himself into flawless and idiomatic English. In 33 cantos and a number of digressions he tells the story, adds political comment and fictional anecdotes, relates the history of the writing of the poem (begun in Cuba 1969, finished in Berlin 1977), and inserts half a dozen poems on invented but representative paintings, and a number of "philosophic" digressions such as "Further Reasons why Poets do not Tell the Truth."

It is all relaxed and colloquial in style, vast and symbolic in subject. The fact that in the fifteenth Canto the poet appears, telling his sceptical readers ("Rather passé, we should have thought, all these hidden meanings") that there *are* no hidden meanings, that "metaphors do not exist", will of course deceive nobody. The poem *is* an allegory, and yes, of course, we are all passengers on the *Titanic*, heading for disaster, but we mustn't give up: in the very last line of all, the poet is still swimming.

It all sounds horribly obvious, yet in the event the poem is a good read, always entertaining, sometimes brilliant, written with a Brechtian impudence that saves it almost completely from pretentiousness. It is hard to see that the sections on paintings have much to do with the rest, except in the obvious sense that they are about the relation between art and life, but they are well done, especially "Apocalypse: Umbrian Master, about 1490":

¹⁰ *The Sinking of the Titanic*. By HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER. Carcanet New Press, £3.95.

*How do you go about painting Doom? The
conflagrations,
the vanishing islands, the lightning, the walls
and towers and pinnacles crumbling ever so
slowly:
nice points of technique, problems of
composition. . . .*

For all its clarity, this is about the problem of representation as structuralism has been teaching us to see it; and here, a few lines later, is Deconstructionism in a nutshell:

*Everything, you see,
is to be rent asunder and torn to pieces,
except the canvas.*

As for the narrative itself, the most brilliant sections seem to be Canto 5 in which an unnamed agitator fails to persuade the steerage passengers to take their rescue into their own hands, to "throw the bastards overboard", because, though "they understood what he said, they did not understand him"; Canto 14, which describes the ship steadily filling with salt water; and Canto 18, which describes the lifeboats not picking up those in the water, in a long sentence of intricate and terrible flatness.

I am glad to end with Enzensberger, for he is a reminder that one can after all be modern without being obscure. He is one who puts things in rather than leaves them out. We cannot turn to him for the epiphanies of Davie or the verbal brilliance of Sweetman, but I shall treasure his book along with theirs.

There & Back Again

The Communist Phenomenon—By MAX BELOFF

THE WORD "Euro-Communism" does not come as glibly to people's lips as it did a few years ago when it was fashionable to believe that Western Communist parties might not merely emancipate themselves from subservience to the purposes of the Soviet state but might even, with East Europe as the bridge, come to influence the whole World Communist system in a more open and more humanitarian direction. On the other hand, Western Communist parties have developed along different lines in response to their own changing environments and Mr Middlemas has had the excellent idea of investigating the fortunes of the

four most interesting among them: the French, the Italian, the Spanish, and the Portuguese.¹

Mr Middlemas has also taken the view that since the public pronouncements of even the most libertarian of Communist parties must consist in large part of efforts at self-justification and endeavour to conceal any internal discordance so far as possible, it would be better to use the method of interview; and the core of the book is thus based on a long series of interviews with leading Communists in the four countries and with other non-Communist politicians and political commentators. Whether, even in private and even to so sympathetic an interlocutor as Mr Middlemas, Communists were prepared to reveal all their calculations and all their objectives may well be doubted; and the somewhat benign impression that Mr Middlemas con-

¹ *Power and the Party: Changing Faces of Communism in Western Europe*. By KEITH MIDDLEMAS. André Deutsch, £14.95.

veys may suggest that what we have is less than the whole truth. Nevertheless the effort was worth making and the book with all its faults is an important contribution to the history of Europe and especially southern Europe since the late 1960s.

What are its weaknesses? In the first place, Mr Middlemas does not provide an altogether satisfactory historical framework for his more specific inquiry. Of course an occasional error is permissible; but he should be able to distinguish between M. Maurice Schumann and Mr Robert Schuman. It is rather the occasional indication that he has not fully appreciated some essential aspects of the phenomenon he is himself concerned to describe. To say that the Bolshevik Revolution reduced individual freedom to a level "only barely above that of Czarist Russia" suggests that either Soviet Russia or Czarist Russia or both are *terra incognita* where Mr Middlemas is concerned; it is to blur the distinction between tyranny and totalitarianism. Coming closer to the present subject, Mr Middlemas tends to assume too readily the irrelevance of parties, movements, and groups outside the framework of Parliamentaryism to which, for the moment, the Communist parties he writes about are committed. In Italy and in Spain (or at any rate parts of Spain) the existence of terror as a conscious instrument of political destabilisation threatens the existence of the State itself; and the

international links of terrorist movements whether of the "Left" or the "Right" must be taken into account in any political balance-sheet.

The other weaknesses are literary. Mr Middlemas is an inelegant writer and indeed often a frankly bad one. He is capable of violating the rules of syntax to the extent of saying what he clearly does not mean; he is not above the occasional malapropism, and worst of all he does occasionally try to compress what he has to say by resorting to an allusiveness that obscures his intentions altogether. It is no doubt particularly difficult to arrange and present one's material clearly when the scene is constantly changing before one's eyes. Room must be found for new facts, and judgments modified where necessary. Nevertheless, with a subject much of which will be unfamiliar to many readers—who but the specialist can keep clearly in mind the stages of the Portuguese Revolution?—complete clarity and some willingness to make use of the guide-lines offered by chronology would seem essential attributes for a would-be contemporary historian.

YET THE READER WHO puts up with Mr Middlemas' stylistic deficiencies is in the end well rewarded. What he has to say about the four Communist parties and their twists-and-turns of policy is important. The dilemmas of the leadership are particularly well analysed and expounded.

If a party dedicated to the root-and-branch transformation of society is to achieve its aim through the electoral process, it will, except in the rarest of circumstances, have to compromise both as to what it offers and as to the classes in society to which it seeks to make its appeal. In most Western countries, the proletariat in Marx's sense is not a large enough section of society to form the necessary basis either for voting support or for the recruitment of cadres and militants. At most it can hope for a situation of a permanent, if stable and in a negative sense influential, minority like the French Communist Party. To break out of this situation means finding allies. But allies demand concessions to their point of view, and these concessions in turn make the leadership vulnerable to the fundamentalists in its ranks. Since all Communist parties are Leninists in the sense of rejecting internal democracy, the result is a series of apparently sudden turnabouts of which again the behaviour towards the Socialists of the French Communist Party in the 1970s provides a classic example. If like the Italian party—much the most interesting of those considered—it gets involved in actual participation in the running of affairs at the national and local level, it becomes even harder to retain its ethos as a party seeking change beyond the mere reforming of the existing order.

Furthermore, a modern industrial society

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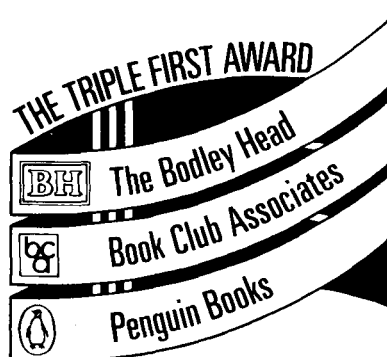
organises itself in many ways of which political parties form only one. Trade unions in particular regularly refuse to fulfil the Leninist requirement of being merely "transmission belts" for the vanguard Party, and develop aspirations of their own in response to their members' requirements. It is not a simple matter to exploit their real power for purely political purposes; but those outside the trade-union framework—the unemployed, migrant workers, "students"—are not an adequate substitute as a basis for the Party. The same considerations apply to the realisation that a mere majority in a legislature or in the election of a President may not suffice to transfer power to be used in radical ways. Quite apart from the international context which affects what can be done within a single country without incurring economic disaster, there will be forces within the society and enjoying perhaps the sympathies of part of the state apparatus—the military, for instance—which may be able to veto in practice what appears open to a government of the Left in theory. The Allende experience was clearly no end of a lesson for some European Communists.

THE ALTERNATIVE OF "Revolution" is also not a very present one. In part this is because the Soviet Union, while seeking to weaken the West in all possible ways, is scared of provoking it too far and upsetting too dramatically the balance in Europe at a time when it has other things—notably China—on its mind. The only country in which there was a revolutionary situation at any time in the 1970s was Portugal, and there it is clear that after early encouragement to the Portuguese Communist Party to follow an extremist course, the Soviet Union reversed itself in favour of caution.

The question that cannot be answered is what remains now of the allegiance of western Communist parties to a revolutionary movement guided and largely controlled by the Soviet Communist Party. Possibly Mr Middlemas goes too far in making the case for their emancipation as having taken place. It is no doubt true that the Soviet Union no longer directly subsidises Communist parties in the West; but what need of "Moscow gold" if one gets a substantial rake-off from East-West trade or through other profitable operations? As for the "ideology", Mr Middlemas is right to point out how small a role it seems to play; on the other hand he also rightly reminds us that whatever the views of sophisticated politicians in the Communist parties may be about the backwardness and inefficiency and unnecessary rigidities of the Soviet régime, for many of their followers what counts is

still the "myth" of the Workers' State. It remains an almost indestructible asset both for Communist parties and for those who do not call themselves Communists—in Britain for instance—but for whom the Soviet government cannot do wrong. Mr Middlemas points out how important was the help of European Social Democratic parties (notably the German and the Scandinavian) to socialists emerging into the political arena after Franco and Salazar. The British Labour Party took no such active part; not just because of its increasing insularity but because, as in Portugal, when British socialists arrived they were apt to find the local Communists more to their taste. It would have rounded off Mr Middlemas' treatment of his theme to have given some attention to this curious fact.

THE IMPORTANCE OF the Soviet myth for the British Left is well brought out by the very title of Stuart MacIntyre's book—*Little Moscows*.² For this was the epithet coined by their critics, and then proudly accepted by a number of isolated communities mainly in mining areas which showed particular militancy in the inter-War period. Mr MacIntyre's treatment is confined to a detailed study of the economic, social, and political circumstances of three such places: Mardy, a mining community in the Rhondda; Lumphinnans,



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² *Little Moscows: Communism and Working-Class Militancy in Inter-War Britain*. By STUART MACINTYRE. Croom Helm, £11.95.

a mining community in Fife; and the Vale of Leven, dominated at the outset of the period by one industry—dyeing. It is a work which is, however, more ambitious than this summary might suggest, since Mr MacIntyre is not concerned merely to explain why these particular localities took the stand they did towards strikes, the treatment of the unemployed, and the other social issues of the time, but also what light this can throw on the whole notion of a working-class community with its internal ties and supporting culture. At the same time he escapes from the danger of sentimentality sometimes inherent in a purely sociological or anthropological approach by placing these microcosms firmly within the changing economic and political fortunes of the country as a whole. Mr MacIntyre, though clearly sympathetic to the plight of the individuals and families he describes, remains throughout the cool professional historian—though even a professional historian of Left-wing sympathies should have known that there was never a coronation of Edward VIII for Communists to refuse to celebrate.

Since one of the features of the three “Little Moscovs” was the assumption at some periods of political and social leadership by Communists—Arthur Horner and the Moffat brothers were in part a product of them—the role of the Communist

Party in seeking to penetrate and take over the Labour Party and the Trade Union movement, which has often been analysed in national terms, is seen here at ground level in a way which throws some light on the outcome. In particular one can see what it meant locally when the Communist Party shifted under Soviet inspiration to the strongly independent Left-wing stance of 1928 and then back again to the Popular Front tactic of the mid-1930s.

How did the Party hold its followers through a series of twists-and-turns whose rationale was not to be found in the Rhondda or in Fife? Though it is not a question Mr MacIntyre asks directly, its ability to retain the allegiance of its rank-and-files must at any rate in part have been due to the fact that it was identified with the presumed successes of the “Workers’ State.” Organised for the purpose of extending their admiration to it, members of the Party had yet another sense of belonging to a community to strengthen their feelings of solidarity with one another. In Lumphinnans, for instance, existing forms of collective activity were supplemented by others organised by the Party, or by its union, the United Mineworkers of Scotland: “sporting teams, a flute band, choirs, the UMS womens guild, Friends of the Soviet Union, the Young Communist League, and the Young Pioneers. As in Mardy, the Lumphinnans miners took possession of the Soviet banner presented to their area at the UMS gala in 1930, and they carried it on marches and demonstrations.” Nor was their enthusiasm weakened by Stalin’s Purges and Show Trials of the 1930s which worried some London intellectuals. In this as in other respects this admirable little book is a reminder of the importance of not looking at recent British history solely in the light of what went on at the centre.

TO READ OF the struggles particularly of the unemployed and of what it meant in resolution to sustain a normal life, one can easily sympathise with those who were taken in by Communist propaganda as to how their lives might be improved. But for the American middle-class dupes of Communism in the 1930s, seduced by New York’s radical *chic*, it is difficult to feel anything but contempt, however hard the lot that befell them in the McCarthy period. Miss Jane Foster Zlytovski certainly paid dearly for her folly and has spared no details of the persecution to which she was subjected after getting caught up with those whose involvement extended to espionage. Living abroad, she was hounded when family anxieties took her back to the US, and kept passportless; when she was allowed back, efforts were made to pressurise her into returning to give evidence at a spy trial. She was driven to the brink of suicide.

Yet the title of her book, *An UnAmerican Lady*,

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is less ironical than she may think.³ She does not seem to have considered that many American ladies found it possible to work for the OSS in wartime—she had dropped out of the Communist network by then—without giving themselves airs and without feeling that the reader is dying to know about her marriages, her amours, her retinue of dogs and other pets.

What does worry one is that she should have been used in sensitive countries in South and South-east Asia with so minimal an intellectual equipment; no wonder American post-War policy was fraught with error. Here is someone who became a Communist in 1938—when the truth about the Soviet Union was already widely known and when former enthusiasts were turning away. And why?

“In a sense it was inevitable that I should become a Communist. Intellectually and emotionally, I was like ripe fruit ready to drop. I had seen Nazism and Fascism at first hand; I had lived in a colonial country and had seen the ravages of colonialism. Furthermore I knew that

another world war was inevitable.”

It is hardly an explanation; others had some or all of these experiences and could still make intelligent choices.

What is also worrying is that even now she accepts so much of the Communist version of history undaunted. Looking back at the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact, which disturbed her not at all, she writes: “I had already understood that Chamberlain was trying to turn the Russians and the Germans against each other, leaving Britain to pick up the pieces. . . .” Perhaps someone so easy to dupe in large matters was a predestined victim of the double agents who got her into the final mess.

Yet even the worst book usually has some fact worth pondering. Miss Foster, who was occupied on the eve of Hitler’s attack on Russia in picketing the White House in the Communist-Isolationist interest, was suddenly told three or four days before the attack that the pickets were being abandoned. How, she asks, did the American Communist Party foresee the attack, when Stalin himself reportedly refused to believe the warning from his own intelligence sources? Perhaps there is a nice little mystery here.

³ *An UnAmerican Lady*. By JANE FOSTER. Sidgwick and Jackson, £6.95; paper, £3.50.

Paul Celan

When Paul Celan came to Jerusalem
the keywords of his poems dispersed
between the Gate of Mercy
and the Gate of Lions
and did not return to him
until the day of his death

Sometimes, in Jerusalem,
I see him stroking
the black hair of a Yemenite girl
and his great eyes
speak of the sadness of a love he missed

The words he joined together
as in a Notarikon
the gales which gathered
between the words
and the portents on the wall
and then the silence
and then the poem

David Rokeah

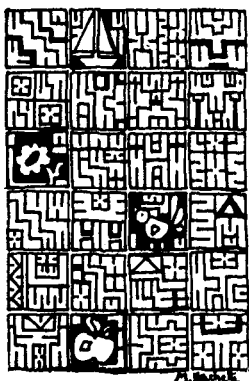
*Translated from the Hebrew
by Ruth and Matthew Mead*

SCIENCE

The Two Maps on the Wall

On History, Education & Folly—By GERALD HOLTON

1. The Oersted Invisibility



THESE REFLECTIONS stem from the idea that science should treasure its own history, that historical scholarship should treasure science, and that the full understanding of each is deficient without the other. If I were asked to indicate the chief motivation behind this once unusual, not to say perverse, idea, I would have to do so in the form

of a stark statement that can be supported, on this occasion, only sketchily. It is this: At a time when passionate unreason around the globe challenges the fate of Western culture itself, the sciences and the history of their development remains perhaps the best testimony to the potential of mankind's effective reasoning. Therefore, if we do not trouble ourselves to understand and proudly claim our own history, we shall not have done full justice to our responsibility as scientists and as teachers.

A good way to illustrate this point is to glance at the work of the man whose name graces the award. Even among physicists, Hans Christian Oersted (1777–1851) is little known, although an argument

can be made that he was a modern kind of scientist. He announced his great discovery—that a magnet needle can be deflected by what was then called a galvanic current—on 21 July 1820 in a broadside which he had privately printed and distributed to the foremost scientists of Europe.¹ The publication led to a veritable explosion of scientific work (for example, to the great discoveries in electromagnetism by Ampère and Faraday). Technical applications also followed quickly, starting with an electric telegraph.

OERSTED, then 43, was Professor of Physics at Copenhagen. An autodidact, he had first studied pharmacy and languages, and also contributed to chemistry and other sciences. He was an early evolutionist in biology, a man with wide interests in science and outside. Among his works are some on the relation of science to poetry and to religion, in which he shows himself to be a gentle but persuasive rationalist.

Oersted saw his chief task to be the discovery of the unities in nature. Far from having “stumbled accidentally” on the fact that a magnetic field surrounds currents (as the popular myth still has it), he had sought for years for the effect which practically everyone else, during the two decades of widespread experimentations with voltaic cells from 1800 on, had missed. At least eight years before his

GERALD HOLTON is Professor of Physics and Professor of the History of Science at Harvard University. His article is based on the text of his recent address accepting the Oersted Medal, published in the *American Journal of Physics*. Among his contributions to *ENCOUNTER* is “The Mainsprings of Discovery” (April 1974). He is the author of *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought* (Harvard University Press, 1973) and *The Scientific Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 1978).

¹ Shortly thereafter, he also added that the action between magnet needle and current loop is reciprocal, a discovery usually associated with Ampère, who independently published it later. For good accounts of Oersted's work and motivation, see L. Pearce Williams' account in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*; Kristine Meyer, “The Scientific Life and Works of H. C. Ørsted”, in *H. C. Ørsted, Naturvidenskabelige Skrifter*, ed. Meyer (Copenhagen, 1920), Vol. 1; Robert C. Stauffer, “Speculation and Experiment in the Background of Oersted's Discovery of Electromagnetism”, *Isis*, No. 48, pp. 33–50 (1957); Bern Dibner, *Oersted and the Discovery of Electromagnetism* (Norwalk, 1961); and Barry Gower, “Speculation in Physics: The History and Practice of Naturphilosophie”, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* (Pergamon, New York, 1973), Vol. 3, pp. 301–356.

discovery of 1820, he had declared his faith that light and heat and chemical affinity, as well as electricity and magnetism, are all "different forms of one primordial power"; and he had announced that attempts must be launched "to see if electricity has any action on the magnet." Oersted had been deeply impressed by the philosophical works of Immanuel Kant where he found the argument that all physical experiences are due to one force (*Grundkraft*). He also accepted many views of his friend Friedrich W. J. Schelling, a leading exponent of *Naturphilosophie*, who provided an enthusiastic programme to find the unity of all natural phenomena, and specifically the unity of physical forces, in such proposals as:

"For a long time it has been said that magnetic, electrical, chemical, and finally even organic phenomena would be interwoven in one great association. . . . This great association, which a scientific physics must set forth, extends over the whole of nature."

There is also the response of Mme de Staël; concluding her discussion with him on *Naturphilosophie*, she wrote:

"Systems which aspire to the explanation of the universe cannot be analysed at all clearly by any discourse. Words are not appropriate to ideas of this kind, and the result is that, in order to make them serve, one spreads over all things the darkness which preceded creation, but not the light which followed."

Be that as it may, the lack of Cartesian clarity did not impede the influence of *Naturphilosophie* on Oersted (or for that matter, on Ampère, Faraday, Julius Robert Meyer, and others).

THE THEMATIC presupposition of the unity of forces led Oersted to look for the connection between electricity and magnetism through a convincing experiment. His success identifies him as the modern initiator of the grand unification programme, that great source of motivating energies of modern physics, with a direct genetic influence on Faraday, Maxwell, Einstein, and on to the recent Nobel Prize winners. In contemporary physics meetings, Oersted, at least in spirit, would surely have felt very much at home.

Moreover, Oersted's apparatus for demonstrating the unity of nature's phenomena was eminently sensible, at least in terms of his presuppositions. He sent progressively larger electric current through high-resistance platinum wires. First the wire got hot, then the wire began to give off light, and then he saw the effect on the magnet needle. (Some day I hope to look at Oersted's laboratory books in Denmark to see if he also looked for a gravitational effect, as Faraday did later; it would have been a

likely extension in the thinking of a unifier.)

In his later years, Oersted dedicated himself to many social causes, such as the freedom of the press, and to science education. One of his biographers notes that when Oersted died in 1851, the students arranged for a torch-light cortège in a huge funeral procession in which 20,000 people are said to have participated.

NOW THERE IS NO DOUBT that Oersted's advance in physics changed history in two ways.

It opened up physics itself to a succession of unifying theories and discoveries without which the modern state of our science would be unthinkable. And his key discovery, embodied in every electric motor, also triggered the engineering advances that have produced the modern technological landscape. One would expect such a person to be visible in works of history. Yet, despite his role in the initiation of vast changes in science, engineering, and through it our very society, Oersted is virtually absent from both science books and history texts, not least those which young persons typically encounter in school. If one looks into historical encyclopaedias for what happened in 1820, one finds a plethora of events of a quite different sort. For example, Karl Ploetz's compendium of chief dates of history notes for 1820 that "Austrian troops reestablish order in Italy." The big *Encyclopaedia of World History*, edited by William Langer, records for 1820 that King George III, having earlier been declared insane, dies.

LET ME DWELL a little on this phenomenon, which we may call the *Oersted Invisibility*, for we are getting to a significant truth about the influences that shape the intellectual formation of young people throughout the world.

William Langer's widely used *Encyclopaedia* was not meant to be a synthetic work and does not represent the more sophisticated work of scholars in history today. But the two main concerns that animate the book are still alive in the teaching of history as most young people encounter it in their formative years: the chronological presentation of historically important "facts", and the "periodisation" of the sequence of facts into labelled categories. As to the first, Langer says in his introduction that it is his function to provide "a handbook of historical fact"—as it turns out, chiefly political, military, and diplomatic history. He explains that for him to have gone also into other achievements such as science would have taken him too "far afield." In my copy (2nd edition, 1948) there is a section entitled "Scientific Thought and Progress", precisely 2¼ pages out of the total

1,270—or less than 0.2% (which happens to be better than the proportion of fundamental science support in our GNP). As an attempt to put some order into the chaos of facts, periodisation of history into segments entitled “the Age of —”, “the House of —”, “the Revolutionary Period”, etc., provides a seemingly well-bounded shape to the various fragments of time. But it encourages only occasionally a comment that parts the dark curtain behind which historians are debating. (Was Thucydides right in considering the war of 431–421 B.C. and the war of 414–404 B.C. to be in reality “one period”, that of the Peloponnesian War? How far back do the causes of the revolutionary outbreaks of A.D. 1848 go?)

The net effect, at least on most young minds, must be that the purpose of history appears to be the provision of a well-labelled place for every miscreant if only his factual mischief was on a big enough scale, and to give some space to every ruler, whether effective and beneficent or not. In such books, genealogies of the mighty abound, from the Ch’in Dynasty and the succession of the Merovingian Monarchs to the sequence of Czars and Presidents. One is reminded of Voltaire’s complaint that “for the last 1,400 years the only persons in Gaul apparently have been kings, ministers, and generals.”

Scientists and their works are virtually taboo. If you look for Newton in my copy of Langer, you will find him on p. 431, under the heading “Third Parliament of William III”: “Isaac Newton, master of the mint.” The four-word description is not what you or I might have chosen; but at least he is mentioned, which is more than can be said for Galileo, or Kepler, or even Copernicus. (Others have done worse: Arnold Toynbee’s list of “creative individuals”, from Xenophon to Lenin and Hindenburg, included not a single scientist.)

On the other hand the *Encyclopaedia* does give a detailed survey of, say, the vicissitudes and successions of the Ottoman emperors, from Bayazid II, remembered by Langer for being “the least significant of the first ten sultans”, through the exploits of Selim I (“The Grim”) and Selim II (“The Sot”, remembered as an “indolent ruler, much given to drink”), and so on through the last of them, Mohammed IV, who is described as a boy of ten, followed by a period of anarchy. It might almost be amusing, until one asks what the costs were for the unmentioned mass of humanity doomed to be born, to live, and to die in the dark back-alleys of history.

Every holy war gets its place in Langer and so many books like it. There is a tiny admixture of

humane figures: a Marcus Aurelius, a Jefferson, or a Gandhi. But they are lost in the succession of genocidal maniacs, from Emperor Tiglath III of Babylon, who innovated the idea of consolidating his conquests by “deporting entire populations”, to Joseph Stalin. As John Locke asked: “What were those conquerors but the great butchers of mankind? . . .” Moreover, from one development to the next, any rational conclusion or extrapolation is seemingly hopeless. No wonder that even many of today’s historians, (in the words of J. H. Plumb), “have taken refuge in the meaninglessness of history.”²

Thus the Ploetz compendium—which was the model for Langer, and, as it happened, also the book I used in high school in Vienna—started on a promising note, from a rational point of view, with the entry for 19 July 4241 B.C. as the precise date the good Dr Ploetz proposed for the introduction of the calendar in Egypt. But it, too, rapidly went downhill through the whole sorry list of massacres and delusions, and ended with an entirely unprophetic but appropriate entry, for 27 September 1934, which ran as follows: “Declaration by England, France, and Italy, guaranteeing the integrity and independence of Austria.”

I can well believe the famous story about another boy some 15 years earlier but in a school not far from mine. “You are a clever chap”, the history teacher said to Viktor Weisskopf, “but you don’t know any dates!” “Oh, I do”, he replied. “I know all the dates; I just don’t remember what happened on them.”

2. The Bifurcated Maps

I HAVE, of course, been a little hard on William Langer, a distinguished diplomatic historian, who later became a valued colleague of mine, and who, perhaps partly because of my teasing, did put a good deal more science into the last edition he edited. But the main point I wish to make still stands: wherever their schooling may take place, young people encounter, through the historically oriented set of courses as usually taught, a view of the accomplishments and destiny of mankind that almost celebrates the role of passionate unreason. And if the student is one of the relatively few who also takes substantial science courses, he or she will encounter from that direction a very different picture of mankind’s interests and attainments. Indeed, the opposition between these stories is so great that it must seem to many students that there are really two different species involved.

Let me put it in terms of an image from my own schoolroom in Vienna, an image surely not qualitatively different from the one you carry in

² For a brilliant analysis of the changing tasks of historians, see Judith N. Shklar, “Learning without Knowing”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 109, No. 2, pp. 53–72 (1980), from which the last two quotations are taken.

your mind, or which, *mutatis mutandis*, is being found even today in your town's school. The curriculum at our *Gymnasium* emphasised history, literature, and ancient languages, a triad that merged into one message. Latin and *Caesar's Wars*; Greek and the *Iliad*; medieval German and the *Nibelungenlied*; the chief tragedies of German theatre, the Bible, the *Edda* sagas, and the painstaking probing of the ever-unfinished sequence of historic battles: I must confess it was a powerful and blood-stirring brew—but with only occasional traces of the rational processes.

On the other hand, in our science classes we encountered an entirely different universe. Here was the finished and apparently unchanging product of distant and largely anonymous personages, unchallengeable monuments to their inexorable rationality—but with only occasional traces of historic development. Just as the historian neglects science—Richard Hofstadter said of the historian “he may not disparage science, but he despairs of it”—the scientist is silent about history: “The record” (as a scientist put it to me once) “of the errors of the forgotten dead.”

IT WAS A cultural schizophrenia which I could not formulate, but which I also could not dismiss. I can capture it best by recalling two very different maps that were hanging in front of my class, to stare at and wonder about, year after year.

On the left side was always a geopolitical map of Europe and Asia. (America and most of Africa were evidently on some other planet.) In some storage closet there must have been a whole set of such maps because the left-hand map was regularly changed, a new one for each period, and with each change we students could see the violent, spasmodic, unpredictable pulsation of shapes and colours in the wake of the thrilling story of conquests.

On the right side was a very different map—the Periodic Table of the Elements: the very embodiment of empirical, testable, reliable, and ordered sets of truths. That map was never changed, although there was a rumour in the benches that some of the blank spaces were being filled in (and even that a previous student of that very *Gymnasium*, a man named Wolfgang Pauli, had shown that the different features of the table were the consequence of some underlying great idea, rather than some accident on which nature had settled).

To the mind of the child exposed to these two

maps, the utter differences between them and thus between the subjects they represented were so profound as to seem unbridgeable. On the left side, the forces shaping history were the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. On the right side the forces shaping science were, to use modern terms, the four forces of physics. To the young mind, it seemed like a division that demanded some sort of decision. We know from the autobiographical notes of scientists that this dichotomy can help to focus a career choice. In Einstein's famous remarks, it is the choice, in early youth, between a world “dominated by wishes, hopes, and primitive feelings”, and, on the other hand, “this huge world which exists independently of us human beings”, the contemplation of which “beckoned like a liberation.” It is only much later in life that it dawns on such a student at what great cost this separation was being nurtured, that these two kinds of destiny are in fact intertwined, that these two developments stem from two potentials within the same person.

IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER, students in our classes were left to wonder what the moral point of this bifurcated education would be. Concerning our personal destinies there was in fact a sharp division of opinion between our parents (on one side), and our history books as well as those few teachers who had any interest in discussing such matters (on the other). The parents' theory was that the purpose of the curriculum was chiefly to prepare for the school's final examination without which one could not go on to university. However, our physical education teacher spoke explicitly for the view that presented a different scenario for us. We would be there to fight one day, to revenge the loss of our territories in World War I, and of our honour in the treaties of Versailles, Trianon, and St Germain. We were being readied to change that map on the left once more.³

THE GREAT HISTORIANS we studied seemed, from that second point of view, useful preparations. For example, the father of historical writing, Herodotus of Athens in the Age of Pericles, declares the aim of his great book on the history of Greece is to preserve (as he puts it) “the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the barbarians [from] losing their due meed of glory.” What he means is set forth right at the start. A certain Gyges, upon being made King of Sardis,

“made inroads on Miletus and Smyrna.... Afterwards, however, although he reigned for 38 years, he did not perform a single [further] noble exploit. I shall therefore make no further mention of him, but pass on to his son and successor

³ For a faithful description of the system of education in a *Gymnasium* of Vienna by an exact contemporary, see Egon Schwartz, *Keine Zeit für Eichendorff: Chronik unfreiwilliger Wanderjahre* (Athenäum Verlag, Königstein, 1979).

... Ardys. This Ardys took Priene, and he made war upon Miletus."

Our class quickly got the idea that here was an altogether more glorious type. Even better was his son Alyattes who (Herodotus says) had inherited from his father that war with Miletus, and who "performed other actions very worthy of note." Herodotus tells us one of these: in warfare,

"he cut down and utterly destroyed all the trees and all the corn throughout the land and then returned to his own dominion. . . . The reason that he did not demolish also the buildings was that the inhabitants might be tempted to use them as homesteads from which to go forth to sow and till their land; and so each time that Alyattes invaded the country he might find something to plunder."

Indeed, worthy of note.

Turning to a more recent work, we found that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in his great *Philosophy of History*, struggled with the meaning of history and concluded that

"the final cause of the world at large, we allege to be the consciousness of its own freedom on the part of spirit, and *ipso facto* the reality of that freedom."

I must confess that this formula, when presented in history class, was not easy to unpuzzle; but it had a nice ring to it. History as the evolution of freedom seemed an appealing idea. But just at that point in our studies, this train of thought was deprived of a good deal of its credibility when, one Friday evening in March, the portion of the map of Europe showing Austria turned suddenly brown, and our history teacher, like many teachers in the other subjects, turned up in Nazi regalia on the following Monday.

Hegel also had said, quite correctly, that the most profoundly shaping experience on the mind of the West was Greece of the Homeric Period. The reading of the *Iliad* was meant to be our most permanent memory; I must confess I liked it best of all our classes. Just for this reason let me use it further to crystallise my point. Recall the early scene on the beach before Troy. Agamemnon, leader of the Greeks who are laying siege, has lost his own mistress, robs Achilles of his, and thereby launches 1,000 pages of dactylic hexameter. Agamemnon explains himself in a way which Homeric Greeks accepted: "Not *I* was the cause of this act, but Zeus." It is the habit and prerogative of the Gods to put *atē* (temptation, infatuation, a clouding of consciousness) into a person's understanding. "So what could I do? The Gods will always have their way." Achilles, the outraged victim of Agamemnon's action, takes the same view. Without Zeus, he agrees, Agamemnon "would never have

persisted in rousing the *thumos* [passionate, violent response] in my own chest."

IN FACT, THROUGHOUT the *Iliad*, temptations and infatuations, *atē*, and passionate and violent response, *thumos*, are the chief forces motivating human action. As E. R. Dodds explains (in *The Greeks and the Irrational*) *atē* is, in fact, a partial, temporary insanity, "and, like all insanity, it is ascribed not to physiological or psychological causes, but to the external, 'daemonic' agency." Only very rarely does one encounter in the *Iliad* a glimpse of rationality—dispassionate reason sensitive to long-range consequences—as a motivating force. This role falls to Athena, the goddess of good counsel, who occasionally intervenes in the brawl and carnage (even at the risk of conflict of interest, since on the side she is also a deity of war). There is the famous scene in Book I when Athena catches Achilles by the hair and warns him not to strike Agamemnon. She is visible to Achilles alone and persuades him to put back his sword.

For a moment there is sanity. But on the whole, the poem takes place against the background of a dark, archaic world dominated by will and force, dreams and oracles, blood-lust and atonement, portents and magical healing, orgiastic cults, superstitious terror, and the obligato of reckless massacres—the world governed by the irrational self, the *thumos*, the strong force that surfaces today as tribalism, racism, and the longing for combat.

After the Homeric Age—rather precipitously, as history goes—the landscape does change. It is the period identified as the Greek Enlightenment, during which there was (in a phrase Dodds quotes approvingly) a "progressive replacement of mythological by rational thinking among the Greeks." The rise of this first enlightenment, in the 6th century B.C., coincides with the first stirrings of Western science as we understand it.

THERE WERE BOUND to be enthusiastic mistakes; for example, Protagoras, an early Sophist, has gone down in history as perhaps the first optimist who thought that virtue could be taught, that history could be cured, that intellectual critique alone could rid us of "barbarian silliness" and lift us to a new level of human life. But at least his intention was right. Science and rational thought which produced science are beachheads in the soul that otherwise would be largely given over to *atē* and *thumos*. The existence of such beachheads allows one to hope for a change in the balance of potentials in the individual and, therefore, in the balance of forces that have raged over the geopolitical map since prehistoric times.

I submit that this fact defines, today more than ever, an essential part of the task of all who claim to be teachers. To neglect it is to invite peril. The subsequent history of Greece itself reinforces this point. Around 430 B.C., at the end of the reign of Pericles and the beginning of the Peloponnesian War which finished with Athens' surrender and Sparta's triumph, that first Age of Enlightenment gave way. Teaching astronomy, or expressing disbelief in the supernatural, now could have grave consequences. There followed some thirty years of trials for heresy, with victims such as Anaxagoras, Socrates, Protagoras, perhaps also Euripides, and of course an unknown number of less prominent ones.

In the long series of conflicts between reason and passion, Athena, the Weak Force, had lost.

ONE OF THE CAUSES for this turn of events appears to be that, from the late period of Plato onward, intellectuals situated themselves not *in* but *beside* society. Dodds writes:

"As the intellectuals withdrew further into a world of their own, the popular mind was left increasingly defenceless . . . ; and, left without guidance, a growing number relapsed with a sigh of relief into the pleasure and comforts of the primitive."

Greece saw again a great rise in cults, in magical healing practices, in astrology, and other familiar symptoms. It ushered in the long decline or, to give its proper name, the "Return of the Irrational." It was as if the bicameral mind had become aware of its rational strength—and been frightened by the possibility of freedom from the death dance of history, and freedom from the external gods to whom one could spin off the responsibility for the excesses of *atē* and *thumos*.⁴

THE DECLINE OF Greece shows parallels with our present predicament. We are at the tail end of the second experiment with rationalism, the fruit of the scientific revolution of the 17th century and the era of enlightenment that followed.

That schoolroom I described, and all the others across the globe, may really have functioned as a trap designed to keep us from escaping a destiny that is archaic except for its modern, much larger

scale. The most persuasive evidence that the human mind has the power to progress, individually and cumulatively, from ignorance and confusion to sensible, testable, shareable world conceptions—the kind of triumph of man's rational potential of which his science is eloquent testimony—was all but sabotaged by the method of presentation, itself an institutionalisation of our reluctance to honour the imperatives of sound reason. Indeed, the very facts of science which we had to memorise seemed the work of some deity that plants them in its passive victim, even as Zeus planted the *thumos* in Agamemnon. Never once was the liberating idea presented to us that the findings and very methods of science are the results of an historical process by which mere humans seek sense and expose nonsense—and that the potential for this process is in each of us.

3. Helping Athena

ALL THAT was long ago. Many have worked hard on improving the effectiveness of educators. But the admonition of Max Weber, in his magisterial "Science as a Vocation", has become no less urgent. Rational thought, he reminded his audience, has the moral function of leading to self-clarification, of helping the individual "to give himself an account of the ultimate meaning of his own conduct", and so to be able better to make decisive choices. Without it, life

"knows only of an unceasing struggle of these various gods with one another. . . . The ultimately possible attitudes towards life [remain] irreconcilable, and hence their struggle can never be brought to a final conclusion."

Today, as we watch the reign of the irrational in world affairs, I find it hard to believe that we have succeeded in making a qualitative change for the better in the products coming from our classrooms. Moreover, in our century the would-be conquerors who are writing themselves into the pages of the new history books have learned how to hire and use for their bloody work students coming from our science classes. It is an ominous conjunction of Science and History, making it that much more difficult—and essential—to hold on to the vision that the trajectory of history *can* bring us to a time when, at long last, the goddess Athena in our very soul wins out consistently over the dark passions.

This ancient aim (which Werner Jaeger, in his great work *Paideia: The Ideal of Greek Culture*, identified as the chief hope of education in antiquity) should now be a special concern of those who, through their own life's work, have learned how one distinguishes between fact and delusion, between the demands of eternal laws and of internal longing—of those who care most to find out how

⁴ I am quite aware that a group of philosophers, from Nietzsche to Spengler, from Husserl to our day, puts the blame on the contrary on science itself, on what they call "excesses" of the rational. Their arguments are saved from dismissal as utter absurdity by the unhappy fact that science, too, has frequently lent itself to be a weapon in the service of our Dionysian and anti-human drives.

things work and cohere. The immense authority of, say, an Oersted came of course from the painstaking and repeatable demonstration of a beautiful and useful discovery. The history of science can show that might comes from being right, rather than, as in the rest of history, more often than not the converse. Bringing Science and History together in that kind of conjunction—in scholarly research and in the classroom, for scientists and for non-scientists—is one effective way to enlarge the beachhead of reason.

There are others, there have to be others. But it has been my motivating (and perhaps now no longer quite so perverse) view that this way helps focus a young mind exactly on the point where the confrontation should take place, between the habits responsible for the kaleidoscopic sequence of follies on one side, and, on the other, the kind of passionate yet sane thinking that shaped the development and testing of, say, the Table of the Elements or of elementary particles.

I HAVE NO ILLUSION that more chemistry, more physics, more mathematics will, by themselves and soon, produce wise leaders and wise followers.

Protagoras was too simple. There is no quick cure for the barbarian silliness within us which shows up so grotesquely in the acts of the present-day Agamemnons, generalissimos, premiers, shahs, and ayatollahs. We must also not be misunderstood to be defending some inevitable benignancy, purity, and progressiveness of Science. Paradise will not come upon invoking the name and deeds of Mendeleyev or Wolfgang Pauli.

And yet, enough of us must act nevertheless as if something of this sort can happen eventually: for otherwise it will not change. As we, and the future teachers who pass through our hands, face those young students, there is the opportunity to assert and demonstrate the rational powers of Athena as a complementary and balancing element in the productive life of the human spirit.

The risk of failure is high in all educational efforts, and there are always other, more immediately rewarding things one might do instead. But it is a risk worth taking. For those young students in the schoolroom, wondering about the forces that grip the world map and soon caught up themselves in its convulsions—those were you and I; they are now our children; but they should not have to be our children's children, forever.

Joggers

The windblown circlet of hair
is a parodic crown of bay.
Lost in pursuit of the pure

Olympic gold of health
and efficiency they
are trying to run away

from terminal desires
and overflowing cat-litter trays.
Something inside me tires

as I watch them kicking through
drifts of surplus branflakes
like schoolboys. Then I too

reach the top of the hill,
brush away guyropes of spittle
and start to descend,

applauded by the spastic
clapping of gym-shoe soles
slapping the tarmac.

Simon Rae

DISCUSSION

David Riesman's "Egocentrism"

An Exchange of Views

I WOULD LIKE to further the discussion of egocentrism initiated by David Riesman (ENCOUNTER, August-September 1980).

Three related concepts that describe an individual unconcerned with the effects of his actions on others are Egocentrism, Narcissism, and Egoism. Although they can generate similar behaviour, each concept defines a different psychological complex, subject to different social influences.

Egocentrism (as defined by Jean Piaget) is an unconscious state normally characteristic of young children who remain under the domination of adult authority. Constrained by the relationship of dependency and submission to adults, the child before the age of 6 or 7 normally is unable to participate fully in cooperative and reciprocal relationships with his peers, because he is cognitively self-centred. He cannot see another's point of view. The egocentric adult suffers from arrested development—he tends to be childish, dependent, and uncritical of the authorities whose view he internalises. From a social point of view, what furthers Egocentrism is education in family and school based on extreme constraint that discourages autonomy and cooperative relationships.

Freud defined "narcissism" as a perversion of love away from others to one's own body or to other aspects of the self. He contrasted the primary narcissism of the infant who does not differentiate self from the mothering figure with a secondary narcissism implying a higher development, when love is withdrawn from external objects to an idealised self. Extreme megalomania and psychotic states are characterised by regression to an autistic state of primary narcissism. Serious neurotic conditions, especially "borderline" states generally imply some degree of narcissism. Secondary narcissism is less pathological. Freud wrote that people of the narcissistic type are "independent and not easily overawed." People of this type impress others as being "personalities." It is on them that their fellow-men are specially likely to lean. They readily assume the role of leader, give a fresh stimulus to cultural development, or break down existing conditions.

IN CONTRAST TO Piaget's cognitive egocentrism, Freud's narcissism describes emotional isolation, caused presumably by disturbances in the child's early relationships, especially to the mother. In primary narcissism, love rejected or ignored turns back on the self. In contrast, an adoring mother may feed narcissistic overestimation of self, thus furthering secondary narcissism.

A constraining, highly disciplined society with warm mothering for infants will mould egocentric but not narcissistic children. The peasant society Erich Fromm and I studied in *Social Character in a Mexican Village* is like this. In contrast, an undisciplined society where mothers neglect children can produce seriously disturbed narcissists who, despite opportunities for cooperative activity, remain asocial and egocentric, seemingly apathetic, but full of rage and resentment, hungering for narcissistic adulation as a substitute for love. This is Christopher Lasch's overdrawn sketch of American culture, populated by sad narcissists, whose goal is not to achieve or create, but to be celebrities.

EGOISM, unlike the other two concepts, implies moral choice and ideology rather than psychopathology. The egoist acts selfishly. It is possible for a formerly generous person to decide to act selfishly, to become an egoist who chooses his own interest over others, even though he may be well aware of the latter.

Egoism which describes behaviour rather than character may be advocated as an approved way of life, e.g. "Look out for Number One." To advocate Egocentrism would be absurd. Despite remarks about the advantages of secondary Narcissism, Freud never suggested that anyone should cultivate it.

In traditional society, the typical character of the craftsman-farmer is stingy and self-protective (the hoarding character, as Fromm describes it). Warm feelings are reserved for the family which was necessary for one's survival. The functioning of society requires that people act less selfishly than they are inclined. Rural customs, rituals, and religion promote cooperation and constrain envy and competition that might destroy the community.

MODERN MAN—as David Riesman describes him and his changing institutions—has traded hoarding characteristics for the "other-directed" search for place, meaningful activity, even acceptable codes of behaviour. His inclinations are ambivalent, but more social than the traditional character. He needs to be liked, accepted. The danger for him is not so much that he will harden, but that he will lose his integrity and sense of self in an attempt to adapt and ingratiate, to be what others want. In this context, Egoism may appear self-affirmative and protective. What is the alternative way to discover the "real me"?

Traditional religion advocating self-sacrifice and submission no longer touches the modern alienated social character: nor does it create community for many, if not most, Americans.

Yet, egoism as self-sufficiency is an inadequate ideology. It leads inevitably to self-imposed loneliness and loss of capacity to love and to understand. The challenge of modern education and institutions is to develop the self in a way that respects individual integrity yet cultivates the capacity for compassion, generosity, and a higher level of interdependency.

WHETHER OR NOT this can be achieved depends on the strength of both negative and positive factors. A negative factor is the degree of Narcissism in the population. If we have lost the capacity for concern, especially for children, we may inevitably raise new generations of

narcissists. Another negative factor is the lack of accepted religious and philosophical principles and teaching.

Here, there is a danger of old-fashioned moralism labelling modern expressions of concern for body, diet, health, and self-fulfilment at work as Narcissism or Egoism. Concern with self-development rightly understood is not narcissistic and is at least ethically neutral, possibly a basis for concern about others and their needs for development and integrity.

On the one hand, the working mother risks neglecting her children. On the other, she is less likely to invest all her own hopes in a pampered, narcissistic child. Those who worry about the deterioration of character are too often nostalgic for the Protestant and Craft Ethics, confusing character development with the individualistic, hoarding character. In contrast, Riesman's emphasis on caring and cooperation is the antidote to both Narcissism and Egocentrism.

ONE POSITIVE FACTOR for development of the self is the demand of a technological and increasingly interdependent society for higher levels of cooperation, especially at the workplace. Successful models of leadership may be those who care about other people. Another positive factor is an emotional reaction against unbalanced careerism and a loveless life.

MICHAEL MACCOBY

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REMEMBER W. C. Fields on children and dogs?—these days, I think about "Egocentrism" or Narcissism analogously: anything that evokes the hostility of cultural establishments from one end of the political spectrum to the other "can't be all bad." Yet David Riesman (in the Centre) joins Christopher Lasch (on the Left) and too many to mention on the Right in expressing his misgivings about Egocentrism, Narcissism, Self-indulgence, and the rest of the detritus of the "Me Decade."

I can remember that in the late 1960s, when the phenomena Professor Riesman discusses were clearly emerging, my attitude was sour and sceptical about them; and that attitude was called cynical and "conservative" by some. Now I find myself rather more sympathetic to "Egocentrism" because I find the attack on it to be rooted in a sense of threat felt by the highly educated and cultivated—regardless of their political persuasion—to largely taken-for-granted verities (like "civility," civic virtue, self-restraint, respect for authority, the priority of thought over feeling and facts over opinion), rather than in an understanding of the ways in which "cultural" phenomena (like "Narcissism") are inextricably connected with structural developments in the economy, the polity, educational systems, and the family.

FOR EXAMPLE:

1. Where family stability increasingly depends on satisfactory emotional complementarity between spouses, wise marital choices correspondingly require relatively more sensitivity to emotional needs and relatively less attention to the demographic or social

"suitability" of potential spouses in terms of their age, education, ethnicity, family background, etc. An ideology that encourages "sensitivity training" or constrains one to "pay attention to one's feelings" is likely to be instrumental to this transition. The alternative is a reversion to an ideology of "making do" or sticking with bad marriages "for the sake of..." the children, the church, the extended family, the ethnic group, the community (pick your social criterion).

2. The traditional American rhetoric of freedom and individualism in which persons are constrained to believe that they "create" themselves through their own choices and efforts has always been to some extent in conflict with the structural facts of differential access to opportunity, which strongly affect (if not determine) those choices and efforts. If you want either to keep young (and not-so-young—as David Riesman points out) middle-class Americans in school and out of a labour market unable to absorb them, or to keep their options open and avoid "premature commitment", one good way to do it is to induce them to believe that "*Who am I?*" is an important question that needs answering. The question is able to set them off on a "Search for Identity" which gives them a sense of something "important" to do while they're not doing much else of any public significance. One consequence of a lot of this "searching" behaviour is the dignification of self-absorption, narcissism, and privatisation, which then become conventional topics of public hand-wringing among the privileged.

3. The privatisation is, in many respects, a rational response to the truth that most of us do not, in fact, have much, if any, access to real effectiveness in public life or politics. The very structures of our political system generate "corruption", discourage men and women of vision and sensibility from seeking public life, and make the cultivation of private gardens all the more attractive. Do I exaggerate if I say that I know personally—and so do readers of this journal—at least a dozen men and women who would have made a better President of the United States than any of the candidates in either party? I take it that egocentrism and privatisation are comments on the degradation of political language and on the absence of leaders worth much respect.

I COULD GO ON pointing out the connections between the structures of our major institutions and the "Culture of Narcissism", but there is not space to do it. The point is not that there isn't excess, vulgarity, and inconsiderateness. Surely there is plenty, and Riesman, Lasch, Sennett, and others have told us about them. Yet it seems to me rather vain, even a little comfy, to bemoan excessive narcissism in the culture without a rap or two on the knuckles of the dominant institutions and dominant values that have spawned it.

The excess of "Entitlement" that worries Daniel Bell and others is, in a sense, the history of democracy and the very "promise of America" itself. Almost 40 years ago, W. Lloyd Warner warned us that the rhetorical promise of upward social mobility was dangerous, given the relatively modest facts of it. Do we moderate our ideologies to accommodate them to the "hard facts" of economic life? Or do we struggle against those hard realities to bring them into better accord with our nobler democratic visions? Well, we do both, of course, and no doubt will continue to. At this point in our history,

though, my own inclination is to worry less about the Narcissism of the young than about the self-serving ad campaigns of Mobil Oil, or the apparent decision of the networks to trash Kennedy because he “ers” and “uhs” a lot (or to trash Reagan because many journalists don’t like him). And I worry less about the loss of respect for authority by the young than about authorities who don’t deserve the respect they unsurprisingly feel is due them.

IF YOU “BELIEVE IN” freedom, then you must believe in choice; and if you believe in choice you must believe in encouraging people of all ages to reflect on what they want, think, and feel—and even to reflect on reflecting about what they want, think, and feel. If that’s

Narcissism or Egocentricity, I don’t think it’s all bad, though I agree with Riesman that its excesses are sometimes frightening. But then the quest for freedom by those who haven’t got enough of it always has been frightening to those who have.

In *The Godfather*, Al Pacino interviews a young man who is his daughter’s suitor. The young man has given a flip answer to Pacino’s question as to whether he can support his daughter in the style to which she is accustomed. Pacino replies “this contempt for money is a plot by the rich to keep it from the poor.” Can the same be true of Narcissism?

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A Reply

By David Riesman

THE SYMPATHETICALLY CRITICAL comments by Bennett Berger and Michael Maccoby are clarifying and cogent. They stimulate me to several additional reflections.

Michael Maccoby focuses in part on the important psychological distinctions drawn from the work of Piaget and Freud: namely Egocentrism (in Piaget’s cognitive sense); Freud’s primary and secondary Narcissism; and Egoism as a non-pathological moral choice. Both the scientific terms and the metaphors (and terms often arise out of metaphor) become diluted even in educated discourse. In fact, I was invited to write about “egocentrism” by the editor of *Collier’s Encyclopedia*; thus, it is important to have Maccoby’s conceptual lucidity about the significance of such terms that are sometimes loosely used. And it is important to note that certain kinds of secondary Narcissism can be appealing to others—we speak of people with “winning” ways.

Maccoby continues by suggesting the manner in which the social character of different societies and different strata within a society may be shaped by circumstance and culture. There are also many Americans (sometimes from peasant backgrounds) who are self-protective and live in enclaves to which George Foster’s engrossing essay, “The Anatomy of Envy”, is relevant. But, in general, Foster’s observation seems correct to me: Americans are less envious than peasants or people in many other societies.

Maccoby is certainly conscious of the social conditions under which it is possible to be generous. He is less deterministic, as am I—it is a question of degree, of shading—than is Bennett Berger concerning the ability of individuals to transcend in some degree the social constraints and the prevailing social character. Depending on the spheres of society where one looks, there is still a great deal of social mobility in America, rapidly upward in large corporations, gently downward (and sometimes not so gently) among the children of current élites.

BOTH CRITICS ARE persuasive that there is much that is valuable in Egocentrism if it is an effort toward self-

realisation. But, as in most matters, much depends on both the ultimate aims and the means chosen. Where “self-realisation” takes the form of rudeness, lack of respect for other people without regard either for them or for the context, as so often occurs today, then self-realisation becomes a cover for old-fashioned egoism. To criticise it is not a mask for privilege.

Berger is less concerned about “the loss of respect for authority by the young than about authorities who don’t deserve the respect they unsurprisingly feel is due them.” I do not think this is an either/or matter. It is important for the young to learn to distinguish among the deserving and the undeserving authorities. But, beyond that, there is the “authority” of an idea of civility. I do not regard this as a class matter. So far as I can determine from anthropological literature, all societies and peoples have their customs of civility, from the most isolated nomadic groups to the most urbanised. Social rituals serve the purpose of protecting individuals from each other’s hostility and envy.

Berger’s concluding irony reminds me of the subtle class warfare carried on by some affluent environmentalists, quite unconsciously, who, already having amenities, attack nuclear power plants as easy corporate villains (though hardly ever nuclear weapons’ manufacture-and-stockpiling as a danger to the whole planet)—at the same time using scarce copper to build solar collecting units for their swimming pools. Of course, other environmentalists, who travel light and possess no swimming pools, depend more on the development of their inner resources. The less well-off would like amenities and safety also—but they want jobs, the standard package of consumer goods, and the energy that produces even more of both.

I APPRECIATE that young people are being given time to “find themselves”, especially in the conditions they face in the overcrowded labour market in which they will often be employed at less than their full potential. In that exploration, a degree of Narcissism and of Egocentrism may facilitate discovering talents and interests which

may never be put to use in their occupational futures. But, again, it is a question of degree. An unduly prolonged childhood and adolescence, even though it may be convenient for teachers and schools, is destructive of society and of the individual's opportunity to accept responsibility as well.

As already indicated, I do not see individuals as quite so powerless as Berger does; their feeling is often a rationalisation for inactivity or inability to cooperate. Consider, for example, what the elderly and the handicapped have achieved in the last years through court action, legislation, and regulation. Correspondingly I do not see the corporate structures as so invulnerable. But I do see our society as in danger of fragmenting into an anarchy with one possible outcome in dictatorship.

But I am also a poor prophet. And I am always prepared to work for incremental gains, to improve the quality of individual and of social life. Sometimes I have more apocalyptic reflections about world-wide destruction through nuclear weapons, and, on the domestic scene, the corrosive effects of inflation-feeding cynicism, the feeling of injustice and indeed of powerlessness, and the lack of concern for the future. These pessimistic reflections do not prevent me from encouraging and con-

tributing to efforts to better our society. Thus, I support measures to improve our productivity while minimising the use of scarce resources, and to protect from unjustified abuse those political leaders and civil servants who are concerned about others and are not reduced to a loveless life by unrestrained careerism—they, too, are a scarce resource.

ONE FINAL COMMENT: for over two decades, I have favoured a voucher plan by which young people could choose whether they would become the semi-voluntary captives of the "Education Industry", or would apprentice themselves in work, or would have a small stake, even against all odds, to start a small business. But, as Berger points out, higher education has, until now, captured the largest share of resources (supposedly to help the young) and, through credentialism, of occupations. But higher education is also a consumer good. It is an entitlement to something which young people would not necessarily purchase if they had other viable choices. Yet they are under pressure to avoid the stigma of not possessing it—what has been called "the hidden injuries of class."

Chinese Geese

We summoned emperors to clip the croft
and are abashed. With heads aloft,
our gardeners bring beauty as a gift.

Utility serves whom? Useful to what?
Is beauty functional, or not?
Disdainfully they strut

in milky-coffee-coloured uniform,
with warm nape-stripe, and fine white-ribbon line
seeming to bind on extra brain

or sealed third eyes, but cartilage, in fact.
The male wears larger pseudo-intellect,
drinks first, and walks in front. Both walk erect,

keep close together, seem to share one mind,
and look, through orange-outlined eyes,
askance at humankind.

Do we seem beautiful to geese?
We have a certain water-bearing use,
and frighten foxes. Goose-bill scissors grass,

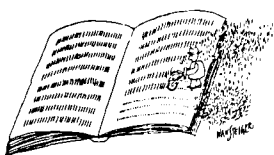
serving goose-appetite, and us: but what
is usefulness in aid of, but god's art?
On orange feet goose mandarins step out.

Anna Adams

LANGUAGE

“Détente”: a Semantic Post-Mortem

By Hugh Ragsdale



DÉTENTE, it seems, was all a misunderstanding. In fact, it was several misunderstandings. Let us begin with the

word itself.

The French noun *détente* means relaxation, of course, but relaxation of a peculiar kind. It is from the verb *détendre*, which means to relax through the release of a mechanism drawn taut with pressure. It means: to discharge; to unleash; to let go, as one would a spring or a rubber band. It is not surprising, then, that the noun *détente* also means the trigger of a gun, and therefore, logically, the condition of *détente* is one which follows a barrage or assault. Now this is not what we mean by it, of course; and we have simply made a silly mistake in the choice of terms. But, on the other hand, we have, since we began to use the term, unleashed an impressive barrage of human rights propaganda that has yet to find a relaxed Russian reception. Incidentally, the Russian terminology for *détente*, *razriadka napriazhennosti*, relaxation of pressure, is entirely analogous to the French (the Russian verb *razriadit'* meaning just what *détente* does). Whether the Russian terminology is appropriate to their objectives is not easy to know because of the controversy over their foreign policy and the closed nature of their society. As for our objectives, my impression is that our understanding of the process of *détente* reflects the anomalies of the term itself.

An older misunderstanding, and a far more serious one, is the problem of cultural incomprehension. We are accustomed to the strictures on Russia of Westerners like Giles Fletcher, Adam Olearius, the Baron Custine, and Karl Marx, John Milton's commentary, less well known, is much like the others':

"They have no learning, nor will suffer [it] to be among them; their greatest friendship is in drink-

ing; they are great Talkers, Lyars, Flatterers and Dissemblers."¹

A century earlier, George Turberville, an emissary of Elizabeth I to Ivan IV, described them similarly in verse:

*Drinke is their whole desire, the pot is all their
pride,
The sobrest head doth once a day stand needfull
of a guide.
The cold is rare, the people rude, the prince so
full of pride,
The Realme so stored with Monks and nunnes,
and priests on every side:
The maners are so Turkie like, . . . the customes
are so quaint,
As if I would describe the whole, I feare my pen
would faint.
If thou be wise, as wise thou art, and wilt be ruld
by me,
Live still at home, and covet not these barbarous
coasts to see.
Loe thus I make an ende: none other newes to
thee,
But that the countrey is too colde, the people
beastly bee.²*

In the same tradition is our conventional view of Russian politics. Government, either Russian or Soviet, has been for a long time a malign conspiracy of men who just manage generation after generation to suppress the forces of decency, humanism, and liberalism which are the noble and inherent virtues of the Russian people. In this scheme of things, Russian statesmen are not merely nasty and utterly self-seeking, but they are unnatural as well, in all the vicious connotations of that term. And the forces of natural law and destiny work on the side of decency, humanism, and liberalism, though they have been unaccountably slow to do their work. A plausible account of the motives of these evil men is rarely attempted, because it is understood somehow that the government is as mysterious as it is malign, and hence the question of motivation is not considered a heuristically necessary part of the picture. I

¹ John Milton, *Works*, Vol. X (1937), pp. 339–352.

² Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Voyages*, Vol. II (London, 1907), pp. 99–108.

exaggerate slightly, of course; but it must seem familiar.

According to this view, the tradition of dissent in Russian politics is virtually its only redeeming feature, and it is a feature which may never redeem the rest unless it is supported by the Western intelligentsia. The irony of such an attitude is engaging, favouring as it does a Leninist style of political guidance more even than Marx's own comparatively *laissez-faire* determinism.

If we want to examine the sources of such incomprehension as this, there are several familiar old favourites which deserve to be mentioned.

THERE IS the American "work ethic" against the Russian "collective farm." There is the concept of "a people of plenty" against the Russian suggestion that "the shortage will be divided among the peasants." There is, of course, a vast historical difference in the security threat to which the two societies have been subjected. There is the fastidious scientific heritage of the West and the Russian observation that "the Russian has three strong principles: *perhaps, somehow and never mind.*" There are others, but I want to examine more fully several of my own personal favourite sources of incomprehension.

THE FIRST HAS TO DO with certain Russian behavioural norms which are utterly different from ours. Here I am concerned to sketch briefly a kind of anthropological profile. Is the authoritarian government in Russia that so offends our libertarian sensibilities as alien and unwelcome to them as we imagine? It may well be, in a metaphorical sense, the reaction formation of a people desperately afraid of its own self-indulgent anarchism, acutely aware of its own lack of self-discipline. Another way of formulating the same

idea is through Geoffrey Gorer's now notorious "swaddling theory."³ What interests me in Gorer is not the alleged indefensible cause-and-effect relationship between the swaddling of infants and the behaviour of Russian adults but rather the parallels between Russian reasons for swaddling and attitudes toward life in general and politics in particular. Gorer argued some 30 years ago that Russian mothers, when asked the reasons for swaddling, usually replied that without it children would hurt themselves. Not without a trace of apology in their manner, they still say so. I suggest that Russians have demanded of their state for ages a function analogous to swaddling—and not only of the state, but also of the *mir*, the *artel*, the *kollektiv*, or whatever concrete forms of *sobornost'* they can find. In a sense they seek in all of these things what Alexander Zinoviev, in his novel *The Yawning Heights*, satirically called the "Institute for the Prophylaxis of Stupid Intentions."

Now, such singular ideas as these demand some reference to evidence. I offer a hasty parade. There is support in a variety of psychological studies, most of them related in one way or another to the well-known Harvard Interview Project after World War II. There is what Hedrick Smith calls "nostalgia for a strong boss", an idea emphasised by Viktor Nekipelov in a recent *New York Times* "op-ed" piece (14 August 1979) called "Here a Stalin, There a Stalin, Everywhere a Stalin, Stalin." There is the apparent reluctance of the Russian peasant to leave the commune and to engage in private enterprise when Stolypin in 1907 offered him the chance to do so.⁴

If you prefer your evidence in purely humanist form, let us consider for a moment the Russian words for "freedom." The 19th-century peasant term was *volia*. It means both freedom and will (in the sense of wilfulness). It is something, in their conception, both desirable and intolerable. A well-known 19th-century dictionary (Dal') defines *volia* as the absence of constraint, and cites a popular saying to the effect that "*Vasha volia—nasha dolia*", your freedom is our burden (or pain). A popular Soviet dictionary (Ozhegov) defines "*svoboda*", liberty, as "the absence of any kind of restrictions or impediments", especially of a political or social nature. The Soviet Academy of Sciences dictionary defines *svoboda*, among other ways, as "the possibility of the manifestation by the subject of his own will in conditions of the consciousness [or apprehension—*osaznaniia*] of the development of nature and society." So much for the brevity of Soviet wit.⁵

Presumably the Russian émigrés illustrate these semantics. They have become unswaddled, and are therefore dangerous both to themselves and to society. Consequently, they have been given their freedom, *volia*, or will, in conditions in which they cannot hurt their tribe, only themselves.

³ Geoffrey Gorer, *The People of Great Russia* (1949).

⁴ Alex Inkeles, Eugenia Hanfman, and Helen Beier, "Modal Personality and Adjustment to the Soviet Socio-Political System", in Robert Hunt, ed., *Personalities and Cultures* (1967). Henry V. Dicks, "Some Notes on the Russian National Character", in C. E. Black, ed., *The Transformation of Russian Society* (1960). Raymond A. Bauer, Alex Inkeles, and Clyde Kluckhohn, *How the Soviet System Works* (1957). Hedrick Smith, *The Russians* (1976), pp. 241 ff. Dorothy Atkinson, "Statistics on the Russian Land Commune, 1905–1907", *Slavic Review*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, pp. 773–787. W. E. Mosse, "Stolypin's Villages", *Slavonic and East European Review*, June 1965. Launcelot A. Owen, *The Russian Peasant Movement, 1906–1917* (1963).

⁵ Dictionaries consulted: Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar'*, I (Moscow, 1956, reprint of 2nd ed., 1880–1882); S. I. Ozhegov, *Slovar' russkogo iazyka* (Moscow, 1963); Academy of Sciences of USSR, *Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, XIII (Moscow, 1962).

THERE IS MORE EVIDENCE in that great sourcebook of Russian attitudes, 19th-century fiction.

Consider the argument of Ivan in Dostoevsky's "Grand Inquisitor." The frailty of the people requires the ministrations of "Miracle, Mystery, and Authority." Remember Raskolnikov, whose story is summarised unintentionally by a character in Zamiatin's *We*: "The only way to deliver man from crime is to deliver him from liberty..." Chekhov's Sgt. Prishibeev, disturbed by a group of revellers, asks, "Where is it written in the law that people may have *volia*? (*Gde eto v zakone napisano, chtob narodu voliu davat*?)". His Man-in-a-Shell almost literally swaddles himself in layers of clothing, galoshes, raincoats, umbrellas, garret rooms, a surfeit of social formalities, and, eventually, a coffin. Both Firs, the former serf in *The Cherry Orchard*, and the characters in Chekhov's *Peasants* fondly recall the good old days of serfdom, the days before what Firs calls the *neshchast'e*—the misfortune: i.e., Emancipation.

I owe some of these suggestions to an article by R. A. Pearce whose conclusion puts the matter nicely:

"we are dealing not so much with the mutual suspicion of two differing political systems, but with the mutual incomprehension of two different cultural traditions."⁶

IRONICALLY, THIS INCOMPREHENSION has been aggravated by the Russian experience of Westernisation itself.

Much of our perspective on Westernisation comes from Arnold Toynbee's comments on the two characteristic non-Western reactions to the West, the Zealot and the Herodian.⁷ Many non-Western countries have Westernised reluctantly or selectively, adopting only as much from the West as was necessary for self-defence against it. In general, that part of the West which they appropriated was the material part of the cultural spectrum. In China, Wei Yuan observed in the

aftermath of the Opium War that "To plan barbarian affairs it is necessary to know... barbarian conditions." Westernisation in China was part of an agonisingly premeditated programme, especially associated with Li Hung-chang and Tseng Kuo-fan, known as the "self-strengthening movement." As Chang Chih-tung put it: "Chinese learning for the fundamental principles, Western learning for practical application." Samurai Sakuma Shozan explained the Japanese view as "Eastern ethics and Western science." The Turkish attitude was similar. In the sense exemplified in these expressions, the Westernisers were, in Toynbee's words, in "pursuit of the Zealot end by Herodian means."⁸ Westernisation was merely a means to the end of giving the native culture a more viable integrity.

BOTH THE TURKS AND THE CHINESE were at least in part conscious imitators of Peter I.⁹

In 18th-century Russia, though the populace did not always welcome Westernisation, Peter and his successors pursued it rather uncritically. Both the

In the Soup

ABCDEFGHI

abcdefghijkl

Alf Landon's Republican presidential campaign of 1936 was notable for three slogans: "LAND A JOB WITH LONDON", "A NEW FRONTIER" (picked up later and used more effectively by another nominee); and "UP

WITH ALF—DOWN WITH THE ALPHABET", an aspersions cast at the proliferation of "alphabet agencies" set up by President Franklin Roosevelt.

How fares the alphabet agency today? Triumphant, the way that the word "proliferate" is defeating "spread." Rarely do Supreme Court justices allow their exasperation to show through in their opinions, but recently one of the brethren had to plow through an outburst of initialism:

"OFCCP regulations require that Chrysler make available to this agency written affirmative action programs (AAP's) and annually submit Employer Information Reports, known as EEO-1 Reports... which culminate in Compliance Review Reports (CCR's) and Complaint Investigation Reports (CIR's) respectively."

This form of writing was too much for Justice William Rehnquist, who added this footnote to the opinion he wrote on behalf of the court, where it now stands as a kind of terminological obiter dictum:

"The term 'alphabet soup' gained currency in the early days of the New Deal as a description of the proliferation of new agencies such as WPA and PWA. The terminology required to describe the present controversy suggests that the 'alphabet soup' of the New Deal era was, by comparison, a clear broth."

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

⁶ R. A. Pearce, "Russian Concepts of Freedom", *Journal of Russian Studies*, No. 35, 1978, pp. 3-15.

⁷ A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (abridgement Somervell), Vol. II (1957), pp. 231-236.

⁸ Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: a Documentary Survey, 1839-1923* (1954), pp. 31, 164. J. K. Fairbank, E. O. Reischauer, A. M. Craig, *History of East Asian Civilization*, Vol. II (1965), p. 199. Toynbee/Somervell, *Study*, Vol. II, p. 235.

⁹ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1968). K'ang Yu-wei, a reformer of the 1890s, produced a study entitled "A Record of the Institutional Reforms of Peter the Great of Russia"; see Jung-Pang Lo, ed., *K'ang Yu-wei: a Biography and a Symposium* (1967), p. 116.

imported political ideal and the medium of Westernisation in 18th-century Russia was the *Polizeistaat*. The term translates, of course, as "police state", but it differs from our 20th-century understanding of the term. It was emphatically a benign concept and it meant, in short, welfare state. It was derived from the theories of natural law of Grotius and Pufendorff as well as from the political writings of the German cameralists and the French police. It denoted the idea of a rationally regulated state in which all blended together, through regulation, into a harmoniously functioning and healthy organism. The goal was the well-being of the people. The government was simply the chief agency of the apprehension and implementation of natural law and civic virtue. Of course, this was a tall order; and only unfettered absolutism was equal to the task. The aspirations of such a state were immodest to say the least. In the words of one of its practitioners, Frederick II:

"In a well governed state, rules and principles are needed for everything; they are executed by the police. This includes the security of travellers, the care of the great roads, and the bridges, of the post . . . the police must take care that there are fair prices for workers, merchants, and others, that no one plays prohibited games . . . [nor takes] excessive usury, that there are no quarrels in the cabarets."¹⁰

Both Peter I and Catherine II issued police

statutes modelled on those of Western Europe, and Catherine's often reads like a pursuit of the Biblical beatitudes.¹¹ In Paris and Berlin, the police undertook the regulation of an astonishing range of activities; including church attendance, family quarrels, commerce in foodstuffs, maintaining the quality of the water and the air, philanthropic measures for widows and orphans, control of prostitution, and of course, sumptuary legislation.¹²

The *Polizeistaat* was suitably swaddling, and in 18th-century Russia it was the last and most progressive phase of progressive monarchy. If the Russian monarchy was not the only progressive institution in a society characteristically lethargic, it was, until the 19th century, by far the most progressive such institution.

AT THIS POINT, TWO CRISES intervened which greatly changed Russian statecraft. The first was the Pugachev revolt of 1773–1774. Pugachev declared revolt against both the sovereign and the nobility, and thereby made the sovereign, Catherine II, to her evident reluctance, dependent on the Russian nobility. That cost the state much of its progressive thrust. The second was what might be called the crisis of the 1790s, and it was posed by the French Revolution. What had until that point been the home of the Enlightenment, the very font of elegant sophistication, intellectual pride, and material progress, suddenly took a form hostile to the very entities which had been primarily responsible for the Westernisation of Russia, the same two against which Pugachev had declared: Monarchy and Nobility. The Russian government faced this crisis in considerable confusion but ultimately developed a programme which was, in brief, a reformulated, and now stubbornly conservative, *Polizeistaat*. The new police state was in part what the old one had been. It was the coordinator of society's needs, a paternal caretaker. In the words of Nicholas I, a man we know as the Gendarme of Europe, the department of police was "the moral physician of the people."¹³ But there was also something new. It had forfeited the dynamic of progressivism, and it undertook now to protect the people from the Western follies of liberalism, democracy, and materialism.

The new style of government, however, utterly disappointed even its most ardent advocate, Nicholas himself. The results are to be seen in the Crimean War. The Russians, still abreast of European military technology during their last war with a major European power in 1815, had obviously fallen far behind in 1854.¹⁴ There was a great crisis of confidence and a general conclusion that reform was required. At this point, the Russian state began groping its way uncomfortably toward the Police State in its contemporary form. It is easy

¹⁰ Frederick II, *Die politische Testamente* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 182–183.

¹¹ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, Seriya I, Vol. XXII, No. 15, 379, 8 April 1782.

¹² Reinhard Wittram, *Peter I, Czar und Kaiser*, 2 vols (Göttingen, 1964). R. A. Dorwart, *The Prussian Welfare State before 1740* (Cambridge, 1971). Marc Raeff, "The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Approach", *American Historical Review*, LXXX, No. 5 (December 1975). M. M. Bogoslovskii, *Oblastnaia reforma Petra Velikogo-provintsiia, 1719–1727* (Moscow, 1902), pp. 1–14. Albion W. Small, *The Cameralists* (1909). A. Lappo-Danilevskii, "L'idée de l'état et son évolution en Russie depuis les troubles du XVII siècle jusqu'aux réformes du XVIII", in Paul Vinogradoff, ed., *Essays in Legal History* (1913). N. M. Druzhinin, "Prosveshchennyi absolutizm v Rossii", and N. I. Pavlenko, "Idei absolutizma v zakonodatel'stve XVIII v.", both in Druzhinin, ed., *Absolutizm v Rossii (XVII–XVIII vv.)* (Moscow, 1964). Kurt Wolzendorff, *Der Polizeigedanke des modernen Staats* (Breslau, 1918). Jean-Baptiste-Charles Le Maire, "La police de Paris en 1770", *Mémoires de la Société de l'histoire de Paris. . .*, Vol. V (Paris, 1879). Nicholas de La Mare, *Traité de la police* (4 vols. Amsterdam, 1729–1738).

¹³ W. Bruce Lincoln, *Nicholas I* (1978), p. 89.

¹⁴ Walter Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy under Nicholas I* (1967). N. S. Kiniapina, *Politika russkogo samoderzhavii v oblasti promyshlennosti (20–50 gody XIX v.)* (Moscow, 1968), ch. VI. L. G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia i flot v XIX veke* (Moscow, 1973), pp. 277–351.

enough to imagine that it requires a large police apparatus to do what Peter I did: namely, import foreign ways into a society fundamentally hostile to them. And it is easy to see that it requires a large police apparatus to do what Nicholas I did, namely, prevent the importation of foreign ways into a society of which substantial sections have grown almost addicted to them. It is easy, then, to imagine what an enormous police apparatus is required to do both at once, as in the time of Count Witte and of Stalin, importing the material part of the spectrum of foreign culture alone while carefully screening out the appurtenant contaminants of liberalism, democracy, and free enterprise. These ideas would destroy the very government which is alone responsible for the flow of technical ideas without which the backward but modernising society could not survive.

HERE IS the dynamic that characterises the nature of the Russian state in the last hundred years. It must of necessity do two things whose juxtaposition is intrinsically uncomfortable if not incompatible: it must borrow Western culture, and simultaneously must combat it.

IN SUMMARY, I suggest that Westernisation has been not exclusively but substantially a counter-accommodating influence in the struggle of Russia and the West to find grounds for conciliation. The form of the Russian police state is a response to Russian behavioural norms, to the needs of the great game of power politics, and to the strange cultural relationship between Russia and the West.

Every time a dose of Westernisation is injected into the bloodstream of Russia, there is a corresponding generation of antibodies to combat it; consequently, the incomprehension of the two cultures is actually aggravated by our conception of the natural approach to accommodation. *Détente* not only relaxes tensions; it also draws them more taut.

For us, *détente* was the pious prayer that the Soviets would permit a kind of Darwinian cockfight between their morals and ours. Providence would be on our side, something they implicitly conceded by shrinking from the fight, i.e., the free exchange of ideas. The "ideological struggle" was their idea, yet they refuse to come out and fight it. In fact, the Russian masses may well be immune to our ideals, though both their government and we ourselves make the mistake of supposing the contrary, and their intelligentsia has enough policing to repress its preferred bent for freedom. What we have been up to in *détente* was to fight Russian expansion insidiously, indirectly, cheaply, any way but directly.

We have tried to rot the teeth of the bear by force-feeding it sweets (Helsinki). Given our cultural outlook, that has seemed safer than the quest for world peace through military preparedness. But given their cultural outlook, it is more threatening. In their view, the whole of Basket III is an attempt to corrode what has been since long before the Soviet era the heart of the Russian political dynamism. A far safer and more reliable means of addressing the problem is through the conventional, unsatisfactory, awkward and difficult, ignoble, and un-idealistic policy of recognising that their internal affairs and cultural idiosyncrasies are matters beyond our competence and of confronting them where we can and must succeed: in the arena of force and diplomacy.

Proposal

For all that conjuring miles can do
With rosy gauze or a black curtain,
You still seem matter-of-fact and certain;
And, when I remember, you are you
And still not too good to be true.

But if the curving earth is set
On forcing horrible reflections
Of its own hunchback on our affections,
Then let us agree to try to forget
And meet, if again, as we first met.

James Michie

“Our Decade of Political Infantilism is Over” . . .



New York City

WHAT ONCE seemed unthinkable is now a fact. Wild-eyed radicals who denounced big business in the 1960s are flocking to corporate board rooms in the 1980s as accountants, consultants, lawyers and executives. Ex-Yippie leader Jerry Rubin won headlines by joining a Wall Street firm, and radical Abbie Hoffman did the same by coming out of hiding—though not entering business. Scores of others are quietly working their way up the corporate ladder.

With little fanfare, a former Chicago activist has become a railroad-association officer; an antiwar student journalist is now public-relations manager for a Texas oil company; a black-studies advocate is a Boston accountant.

Even the Reagan administration's new budget director, David A. Stockman, is a former antiwar activist who went on to become a conservative politician. While an undergraduate at Michigan State University, Stockman signed a newspaper advertisement declaring his intention to “refuse to fight against the people of Vietnam and refuse to be inducted into the armed forces of the United States.” He was also the only paid staff member of the antiwar Vietnam Summer, which he describes as a “church group engaged in an entirely acceptable activity.” Now Stockman, 34, is leading the charge to reduce regulation of business and to slash the Federal budget.

WHAT CHANGED for many ex-activists was not so much their ideals as their desire to earn a decent living, the end of the Vietnam War, and the attitudes that come with growing older. For many of them, the halls of power simply seem the best place to make their mark on the world.

“I can do a lot more with a base of capital than with a pocketful of rhetoric,” reasons Sam Riddle, a former Michigan State University rebel who is an oil-company lawyer.

Riddle, 34, is a classic example of what is happening. As a student from 1968 to 1972, Riddle led demonstrations and building takeovers for black-activist causes and to protest the Vietnam War. Once

he shocked a Big Ten basketball crowd by stopping the game to demonstrate against racism and the war.

Now the father of four sons, Riddle takes pride in his 1960s political activities, but he is setting more conventional goals. He is active in the business world, working as an attorney for the Phillips Petroleum Company in Denver.

“I’m no longer interested in standing on my soapbox and shouting into the wind. Now I’m more interested in producing the soapboxes.”

WHILE NOT ALL EX REBELS are carrying briefcases today, enough of them are in positions of influence to have an effect on the business world. There is a discernible trend of people who were alienated in the late 1960s and early 1970s now getting master’s degrees in business administration and going into business. They are influencing issues—at stockholders’ meetings and in private discussions with the boss—ranging from consumer ripoffs to fair employment practices.

ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN 1960s leaders who has turned to the business world is Rennie Davis, a pillar of the antiwar movement. Davis was a defendant in the “Chicago Seven” conspiracy trial, in which activists were accused of planning disorders that erupted during the 1968 Democratic convention. In the decade since, Davis has become a co-partner in W. A. Smith & Associates, a financial-consulting firm in Denver.

Dressed in a business suit rather than an old Army fatigue jacket as in the past, Davis, 40, gives financial advice to small and medium-sized firms. Says a client: “Rennie’s goal is still nothing less than saving the world—but he found that working outside the system was like attacking a mountain with an ice pick.” A fellow “Chicago Seven” defendant, Jerry Rubin, 41, claims he can accomplish more as a venture banker for John Muir & Company in New York than he could out on the streets. “Money is power,” Rubin says, “I know I can be more effective today wearing a suit and tie and working on Wall Street than I can be dancing outside the walls of power.” As a securities analyst investigating new companies, he can “find the financing for the socially aware risk takers who will become tomorrow’s titans.” Adds his boss, Ray Dirks, “He’s a good communicator.”

Rubin says most of his opinions are the same today as they were 15 years ago.

MANY YOUNG EXECUTIVES claim they have a different view of the world. “I changed, but anytime somebody gets 10 or 12 years older, they change,” says Paul Soglin, 35, former student activist at the University of Wisconsin and now a business and family-affairs lawyer in Madison. “When you’re a student and you oppose the Vietnam War, your access to power is very limited. When you become mayor of Madison as I did at age 27, and you put

... the End of a Hippy Dream

together a 60-million-dollar budget, you're dealing in a different arena."

FOR MANY FORMER REBELS, the decision comes down to whether to buck the system entirely or to become a part of it. Some want to make changes in the business world but are willing to play by the rules of Wall Street and Madison Avenue.

For many protest leaders, poverty was a luxury they were willing to tolerate only while they were young. Now, worrying about money has become a sobering experience.

Radical days are past. "Anyone who isn't a radical at age 20 is heartless, but anyone who is still a radical at age 30 is mindless" is a slogan they follow.

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

London



zines, could prove far more bitter and destructive than many of the more widely-publicised disputes.

In keeping with the fashionable Left-Wing edict the magazine propounds the row is not about pay, working conditions, or redundancies, but the battle between idealism and the realism needed to ensure its survival.

"Time Out" has always enjoyed an almost naive democracy. When its owner, Tony Elliott, launched it in 1968 with £70 as London's "what's on" consumer guide, it was steeped in the Hippy Culture from which it came.

All the staff were paid the same, while the directors received what was over at the end of the month, usually very little. All decisions, both editorial and financial were made collectively in what they regarded as a Socialist Blueprint for the Future.

THOSE PRINCIPLES still exist today. Apart from the editor and directors, everyone from the messenger to news editor is on £8,700 a year, and they are still consulted about all policy decisions. But the signs are that the dream is turning very sour.

Elliott, watching the gathering prestige and success of his magazine, not surprisingly wants to extend its

readership beyond its present 82,000 circulation by employing more experienced staff.

He would like to be in a position to take on writers from Fleet Street, more prestigious illustrators and strengthen the management, particularly in the circulation and promotion areas, and it is here that the row stems.

Inevitably, such appointments would involve breaking the pay parity that currently exists, since they would have to offer considerably more than £8,700.

Bob Wilson, circulation director, said: "In the days when we were all earning £10 a week pay parity didn't only seem fair, but made the book-keeping easier. Now it's up to £8,700, that's obviously a ridiculous sum for the jobs some people are doing.

"By paying everyone the same, you remove the incentive. Some people here work very hard but others just cruise their way through the week."

UNTIL NOW, this had been a problem the management had brushed under the carpet. In the interest of increasing their circulation, they bought industrial peace by concessions to the staff. Now Elliott wants to extend his business he finds his way blocked by his employees.

Looking anything but a proprietor, in faded jeans and garish sweater, he said: "I would like to buy out a couple of other magazines, and I'm interested in a number of other ventures, but how can you do that if the staff insist you have to pay them £8,700? ..."

THE STAFF, who have occupied the conference room and face a High Court eviction order for trespass, tell a different story. They guard their parity rights and powers of endorsement on Elliott's proposals, fiercely. One told me: "Why should Elliott want to change the formula? We've got our market, and they know what to expect in the magazine and that's what they like. They don't necessarily want special star writers."

BUT UPSTAIRS in the unimpressive management office, with its shaky trestle table, Wilson accused the staff of failing to understand *Time Out's* problem and the need for changes.

"There are people on the magazine who are far more interested in politics than what *Time Out* is about. We are an entertainment and listings guide, not a voice trying to put the world right.

"There's no doubt that the kind of editorial content we offer with our writers touting every cause in the book, puts a lot of people off buying it.

"We have climbed down in the past, but we've learnt the lessons, very much to our cost. If we have to clear out our entire staff onto the street and start all over again, then so be it."

Simon Kinnersley
DAILY MAIL (London)

LETTERS

Johnson or Lowenthal?

Two conflicting statements appear on opposite pages (88, 89) of the April issue of *ENCOUNTER*.

One, by Paul Johnson, to the effect that "the policy of *Détente*" is "seen in retrospect to have been a costly series of errors." The other, by Richard Lowenthal, advocating economic cooperation in the form of providing the Soviets with specialised technologies to develop Siberian resources of oil and gas. In my view both statements are dangerously wrong.

1. Common sense dictates that continuous tension, like continuous absence of love in a family, precludes any influence. Only in a loving family the threat of withdrawal of love is an effective disciplinary measure. Similarly, the threat of ending *Détente* may be an effective political weapon. Without *Détente* only military weapons remain.

Moreover, *Détente* did and should include China. This way it contributed to the maintenance of the balance of power. It is seldom realised that direct comparisons of Soviet and Western armed forces are too limited and that China cannot be ignored. (Canadian initiatives in this respect are usually forgotten.)

2. It is a misinterpretation of Russian history to believe that "the help of Western capital and technology" to develop Soviet energy resources would reduce the push towards the Gulf. Such a push is dictated not so much by a need as by proximity and power. We can do nothing about proximity, but energy is power and there is no need to increase it to achieve a "balance."

Relating Polish events to the policy of *Détente* is equally unrealistic. The Polish trade union movement arose spontaneously, and its supporters never gave a thought to *Détente*. The Soviets may have.

TADEUSZ GRYGIER
Professor Emeritus

University of Ottawa
Canada

John Grigg's "If" (1943)

IT WAS Clemenceau who said that "war is too serious a matter to be left to generals"; and Mr John Grigg ("Looking Back at 1943", *ENCOUNTER*, February-March) believes (rightly in my view) that the history of grand strategy is too important to be left to military historians—and especially official military historians.

The latter have been altogether too complacent about the policy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Second World War. I pointed out in my *Britain and the Second World War* (published in 1970) that the relaxation of the "Europe First" rule which followed the decision not to invade France at an early date enabled Admiral Ernest King of the US Navy to build up the offensive against Japan in the Pacific to such an extent that, by the end of 1943, there were more American servicemen there than in the European and African theatres. As Churchill com-

plained to Halifax, "Just because the Americans can't have a massacre in France this year [i.e. 1942] they want to sulk and bathe in the Pacific..." And I argued that the shortage of *LSTs* (Landing Ships, Tank) for the European theatre delayed the landing in the south of France until six weeks after *D-day* and thereby prolonged German resistance through the winter of 1944-45.

It is true that the invasion of France in 1942 would have been, as Churchill said, "a massacre." But John Grigg has convinced me that it should have taken place, as General Marshall argued, in the summer of 1943. The fault of General Sir Alan Brooke's strategy lay in his insistence upon actually invading Sicily and Italy, instead of calling a halt at or even before the clearance of the African mainland. No one can deny that the *D-day* landing was a remarkable feat of organisation when it actually took place in 1944. Nevertheless, as Mr Grigg argues, much of this organisation could have been attained a year earlier, with the added bonus of a much weaker preparation of the defences on the German side.

Many fruitful consequences would have flowed from this. The R.A.F. would have been relieved of the immensely costly and unsuccessful task of trying to break enemy resistance by indiscriminate bombing, and could have devoted itself early in 1943 to the task of destroying communications. Occupied Europe would have spent one year less of suffering under the Nazi heel. And immediate relief would have been brought to the Eastern Front, where the Red Army was bearing the brunt of the assaults of Hitler's war machine. Some of the feelings of hostility towards the West harboured by the Russians during the "Cold War" period would have been dissipated if the Western Allies' pledge to invade in 1943 had been honoured.

It may be that the war in the Far East would have continued until 1945, as it actually did. In that event the 18 months upon which British post-War planners were relying for the reconversion of British industry before the end of "lend-lease" might actually have elapsed, with consequential beneficial results upon Britain's recovery.

HENRY PELLING

St John's College
Cambridge

The Blunt Affair

MR A. J. P. TAYLOR and Sir Kenneth Dover (*ENCOUNTER*, June) disclaim any intention to revive the Blunt affair. But having done so, they must put up with a reply by a Fellow of the British Academy who unfortunately was unable to attend last year's Annual General Meeting and who ever since has considered the Academy's failure to expel Blunt as one of the most discreditable incidents of recent academic history in Britain.

First as to the law. According to Rule 11 of the By-laws the AGM "may remove the name of any person from the list of Fellows on the ground that he or she is not a fit and proper person to be a Fellow." The words are not subject to any qualification. They cannot be understood as limiting the power of removal to grounds appertaining to scholarship, as Rule 27 relating to elections seems, but cannot intend, to do; for it is impossible

to believe that it is open to the Council to nominate for election a person who has been convicted of or has confessed to a serious crime, let alone one of the most serious crimes of all, viz. treason. But even if Rule 27, by its reference to Article 6 of the Charter, should contemplate exclusively academic achievements, the absence of any such reference in Rule 11 underlines the generality of the power of removal.

However this may be, it is distressing to learn from Mr Taylor's letter that in voting against the expulsion of Blunt he believed he was acting as one of "the defenders of intellectual liberty." This involves a confusion of frightening dimensions. Is it suggested that intellectual liberty implies the right to commit treason or that treason is the justifiable product of intellectual liberty? Can it seriously be thought that a spy and traitor necessarily acts in defence of intellectual liberty? Have we so completely forgotten the meaning of language as to be unable to distinguish between crime and motive (though we know nothing whatever about the true character of Blunt's motives)? Can it reasonably be believed that if Blunt's misdeeds had been known in 1955 he would have been elected or anybody would have ventured to propose him?

ONE OF THE MOST PAINFUL aspects of the Blunt affair (which, if he had not resigned, would have compelled me to leave so mealy-mouthed a body as the British Academy in 1980) is the lack of moral fibre which the vote at the AGM disclosed. Can we no longer recognise and condemn a crime, when it is admitted and plain to see? Must I, or a foreign Corresponding Fellow, or one of our Honorary Fellows at the annual dinner sit next to a self-confessed criminal? Is there, for purposes of membership, any difference between a traitor, a murderer, or a thief? (There is a hint at *l'affaire Dreyfus* in Mr Taylor's letter; but Dreyfus was innocent, Blunt admitted to be guilty.)

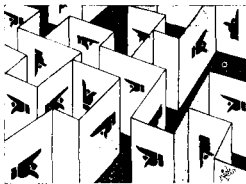
I shall defend real "intellectual liberty" to the last, but I deny the right of anyone to call treason an act of intellectual liberty or a man "fit and proper" for membership of the British Academy merely because he is academically distinguished. This is a matter, not of party or institutional politics, but of common sense and very elementary moral values. It is paradoxical that by his resignation a traitor enabled the Academy to maintain them.

F. A. MANN, CBE, FBA

London

The German Mind & Right Extremism

A Comment on Recent Findings—By S. J. ROTH



THE mammoth SINUS study discussed by Kurt Reumann (ENCOUNTER, August) is one of four recent West German public opinion studies of the strength of Right Extremism among Germans today. The second, a study by the

Allensbach *Institut für Demoskopie*, based on a smaller sample of 1,030 Germans interviewed in November 1978, is also mentioned by Reumann. The third is an impressive piece of research by the Nuremberg social scientist Badi Panahi, based on a postal poll on 9 November 1977 of 1,400 randomly selected citizens of whom 1,038 responded. And finally, there is the study by Professor Klaus Sochatzy, devoted entirely to the attitude of youth and conducted through interviews with 867 school-children and youths in the greater Frankfurt area between 1 January and 18 July 1979.

In an effort to understand the present state of the "German mind", I analysed and compared the four studies in a research paper just published by the Institute of Jewish Affairs in London. Like Reumann, I criticised the methodology of the SINUS study and the arbitrariness of its questions and statements, many of which do not justify being regarded as indicators of Right Extremism. As one brought up in the Jewish tradition of close family ties, I would, for example, question whether "adoration of the family" can be called a "Right-wing" criterion. (True, the SINUS study speaks of "exaggerated adoration"

—but what is "exaggerated"? I fully concur with Reumann that the SINUS "Right Extremist Protest Potential" scale is based on formulations which make it more of a measurement of "anti-Communism" than of Right Extremism. Moreover, the questions clearly show that they were devised before May 1979—i.e. before the Far Right in Germany started to engage in serious acts of violence and terrorism. Therefore the questions which make up the scale include nothing about the use of explosives; about attacking foreigners or Jews; outrages of the October 1980 Munich-Beer-Festival type; or, generally, violence against individuals.

What I find most disturbing is a tendency to sensationalism. The SINUS study will appear in book form under the dramatic title *5 Million Germans: We Should Have a Führer Again*. The figure of "five million" is an extrapolation to the total population of West Germany from the 14% support for the *Führer* principle or the 13% "Right Extremism" found in the SINUS sample of 6,968 Germans. But the figure of five million should be compared with some realities.

In the last German election (October 1980), only 1/80th of that number, 68,006, actually cast their votes for the right-wing *National Demokratische Partei* (NDP). This was 0.2% of the total poll, and it represented a decline against the 118,581 voters (0.3%) four years earlier and a dramatic drop from the situation some ten years before when the NDP, with 1.2 million votes, almost cleared the 5% proportional representation hurdle applicable to electing *Bundestag* members.

A similar comparison can be made between the 4%

Nazi sympathisers revealed by the SINUS study, which would amount to some 1,360,000 voters, and the 1,500 who actually participated in neo-Nazi movements in 1980 (according to the latest information provided by Mr Gerhard Baum, the West German Minister of the Interior). There were another 18,300 members of Radical Right movements not labelled by the authorities as "neo-Nazis", giving a total of 19,800 organised Right Extremists in 1980. This figure is a slight increase on previous years, faithfully reported year by year by the Federal Ministry of Interior. The total number of Right Extremists was 17,800 in 1971, 17,600 in 1978, 17,300 in 1979—and then the increase in 1980. The total of "neo-Nazis" was 900 in 1977; 1,000 in 1978; 1,400 in 1979; and 1,500 in 1980.

The most likely explanation of these huge discrepancies between the SINUS results and the election and membership statistics is that public-opinion polls suggest a potential, a latent disposition to Right Extremism, rather than identifying those who already act on their leanings. This "disposition" is also confirmed by the strength of the Far Right press in Germany. There were 92 Right-Extremist periodicals in 1979 with a total weekly circulation of 174,300 copies.

WHATEVER THE FAULTS of the SINUS study, its results are not very different from those of the other three studies. Because the methods applied and the wording of the questions are not identical, it is not easy to bring the four studies to a common denominator, let alone "add up" the results. The difference in timing also militates against that. But, making full allowance for these difficulties, it is worth recording that while SINUS found 13% Right Extremists, Professor Sochatzy, in his study of youth, shows 26.1% (of which, however, only 8.3% hold their views strongly). On questions which indicate *some approval of or sympathy for Hitler and Nazism*, SINUS shows 4% agreement, Sochatzy 5% strong agreement, with another 9.3% expressing less pronounced approval; but in the Allensbach study the percentage reaches as high as 21 to 37%. On *Anti-Semitism*, SINUS has two items, each with 6% showing strong agreement with the anti-Semitic statement put to them, and another 15 to 19% showing moderate or weak consent. In the study by Panahi, the average of positive answers to the anti-Semitic propositions is 6.06%, while Sochatzy shows 7.6% in strong agreement and another 9.4% with a less pronounced anti-Semitic response.

THERE ARE two comforting features in this picture. First, as Kurt Reumann mentions, the situation is gradually improving. Comparisons over time, where available, indicate that the current results are better than those in previous similar enquiries. Second, according to the age breakdowns of the respondents, younger people show less tendency towards Right Extremism. The dividing line seems to be around the age of 50. People who belong to the War generation are still the worst, perhaps because of the tenacity of the Nazi propaganda— notwithstanding all subsequent revelations—or perhaps because of an unconscious desire to present Extreme Right values in a better light so as to make it easier to live with their own past. As the Allensbach study puts it: "The older they are, the less critical they are [of the Nazi régime]."

I am, therefore, not unduly alarmed about the German situation though I would urge close attention to it by way of improved education towards democracy, public enlightenment, and legal and administrative measures to curb Right-Extremist activities. I find, however, little support for the implication in the editorial introduction that the West German authorities are concerned only with the Right Extremists. On the contrary. Until very recently the accusation against Bonn was that, if not exactly blind in its right eye (as Weimar was), it was certainly myopic. This has changed only since the Right turned to violence and terrorism—a method previously employed only by the extreme Left. One hates to apply the much misused word "even-handed", but even strong hands are needed on the Right and Left because democracy is threatened from both extremes.

S. J. ROTH

*Director
Institute of Jewish Affairs
London*

Brzezinski & the Philosophers

SO, THE MIGHTY are fallen. Mr Brzezinski has cast down the imaginative, consigning them to the fourth circle of his moral universe (ENCOUNTER, May), just below the feet of what appear to be trade unionists (though it is too dark to tell) and just above the heads of what are clearly "mindless activists." Thus, aloof on Olympus, the former National Security Adviser packs "the contemplative" off to Styx.

Though admiring the symmetry Dante no doubt would have found the hierarchy rather distressing: Count Ugolino walking in the precincts of light, Saint Thomas stumbling in the gloom?

Perhaps Mr Brzezinski should visit a leading philosopher (if he can find one) asking if there is any favour he can bestow that would alleviate the misfortune of thought. You may recall that this was Alexander the Great's course of action on hearing Diogenes had resorted to living in a tub. You may also recall the famous philosopher's reply: "Yes, you can help—move out of my sunlight!"

WILLIAM S. MILNE

*University of
Newcastle upon Tyne*

Simplicity & the Signal

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI believes the press and public lack skill and desire to discern nuance. He believes the Carter foreign policy was constrained by a press and public yearning for simplicity.

His charge is hollow, ignoring the failure of the Carter administration itself to master complexity, develop appropriate policy, and articulate this policy with a common voice. This was an Administration of free-lance policy-makers. While Carter and Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance and Andy Young, and others may individually have grasped foreign reality, their public conflict sounded like babel.

Mr Brzezinski's analysis focuses on the wrong side of the microphone. Indeed, he is the one guilty of simplification when he blames the listener and refuses to consider the quality of the signal.

ROBERT CAROW

Columbia University
New York

How to Spell "Sandinista"

YOUR DOCUMENTS on Nicaragua by Michael Leapman and Alan Riding [June] ("Learning How to Spell 'Revolution!'") refer to the *Sandanistas* and *Samoza*. Maybe Father Cardenal should send a brigade of "literacy guerrillas" over to the ENCOUNTER offices.

The question of Human Rights in Nicaragua over the last few years has been far more accurately reported by Amnesty International than by the new-found voice of Sr Gonzalez and his Permanent Human Rights Commission. In the five months I spent on an unsponsored personal visit to Nicaragua just after the insurrection, I heard so many first-hand accounts of the atrocities carried out by Somoza's National Guard, that I found the Sandinistas practising a remarkable restraint.

The personal friendships I struck up with members of the Popular Sandinist Army, their openness, their abhorrence of the corruption and brutality of the previous régime, and the freedom of movement I was allowed even in military installations were enough to convince me that Sr Gonzalez's statements are pure *babosadas*.

TOMAS GRAVES

Deia
Mallorca
Spain

Nationalism & the EEC

OF COURSE Edward Pearce ("In the Light of Common Day", ENCOUNTER, July) is more likely to be right about our future in the EEC than those of us who still believe that the appallingly unsatisfactory Community can still bring to its member states and the inhabitants of those member states benefits more solid and substantial than they could get for themselves. In just the same way Mr Enoch Powell, smacking his lips over every successive outburst of urban disorder, is more likely to be right than those of us who believe that it may yet be possible to make some kind of multiracial society work after a fashion in this country. But that does not mean that those of us who are in the political battle, as opposed to those jeering on the sidelines, should necessarily accept these prophecies of doom and thus make them self-fulfilling.

Those of us whom Mr Pearce christens "Old Believers" hold to our faith because we believe that it would be unimaginably difficult now to recreate a structure in Europe more efficacious than the Council of Europe talking-shop once the EEC has been made to collapse. What was possible—and what was achieved after so many false starts—in the expansionist climate of the 1950s and '60s would be unthinkable in the economic defeatism of today. To raise high the sacred emblem of

holy nationalism may be a good way to excite opinion against the EEC; but it is dishonest to pretend that without the mechanisms of the EEC it is going to be easier to get the countries of Western Europe to work as closely together as they must if they are to survive the emergence of military and economic superpowers outside Europe. Those very forces which are being conjured up to discredit the EEC are the ones which will make it impossible to get fully sovereign nation states to make the compromises to each other's points of view which are inevitable if there is to be any kind of cooperation.

The European Reform Group of the Conservative Party certainly contains a number of MPs who genuinely want to reform the EEC from within; though, by casting doubt on the permanence of our commitment to the EEC, they have not strengthened, but weakened the Government's bargaining posture in Europe. But the group's leaders, and by far its most active members, Messrs Teddy Taylor and Tony Marlowe, make only the thinnest concealment of their wish to get Britain out as soon as they can.

I had vivid confirmation of the fact that cooperation will not be any easier without the mechanism of the EEC. Recently Monsieur Michel Debré, the self-anointed high priest of pure Gaullist nationalism, came over for discussions with the European Reform Group. They found it easy to agree that the supranational elements of the EEC should be jettisoned and that cooperation should henceforward be solely between fully sovereign nation states. That would mean, of course, it was explained to M. Debré, that Britain would be free to import her food from wherever she pleased. That, retorted M. Debré, was out of the question; on that basis there could be no cooperation whatever. And listen to Mr Pearce's own tone of voice telling us how "deeply satisfying" it was to hear "the bruised, resentful talk of the French and Germans." The whole beastly history of our continent shows how impossibly difficult it has been to get the nation states to cooperate until they were frightened into doing so.

AND THAT, OF COURSE, brings one to the huge gap in Mr Pearce's smugly snide piece. Plenty of talk about how we British are being cheated by the continentals, buckets of tears about the disappearance of cheap food (and where, pray, are assured supplies of cheap food to be found in the world today, let alone tomorrow?). But not a word, not a hint, of the terrifying dangers facing us in Europe. No mention of the passionate concern of countries emerging blinking into the daylight of political freedom, like Greece, Spain, Portugal, to reinforce their freedom by getting into the European Community. Nothing about the very real possibility that a break up of the EEC would enormously increase the pressure within Germany to resume the search for reunification, and to seek it in Moscow.

Mr Pearce would no doubt claim that he is not advocating a break-up of the EEC, only its gradual dissolution into a loose free trade area. Those of us who still believe in European unity (we are more numerous in the Tory Party than Mr Pearce suggests, and certainly many times more numerous than Mr Teddy Taylor's group) are unyielding in our conviction that, at the very least, the European Community must provide within it some mechanism to ensure that the interests of the Com-

munity as a whole are constantly presented to member states (which is the task given to the Commission by the Treaty), and that the Community as such exerts some pressure on public opinion in Europe to support policies beneficial to the Community as a whole (and that is the task given to the Parliament).

I am more than ever sure that I would rather be wrong, with those who believe the European Community can still do great things, than right with those who so cheerfully contemplate its inevitable failure. Anyway, we may well not be wrong.

ANTHONY MEYER M.P.

House of Commons
Westminster

SIR ANTHONY MEYER injures the rational case for Europe far more eloquently than I when he speaks of preferring to be wrong with Europe than right against it.

He denounces nationalism within the EEC. The French have practised it and done well on the proceeds. As to food supplies, which world market prices are above those of the EEC's rigged bazaar—and why does Sir Anthony suppose M. Debré was so uncooperative? He tells us that the Council of Europe was a talking-shop. What is the European "Parliament" except a mobile emporium of chat, and one which pays its customers ludicrous money for no more than the loss of their self-respect.

Why will membership of a grandiose committee of malfunctions reinforce political freedoms which Portugal, Spain and Greece took for themselves as Sovereign States? The EEC has nothing to do with freedom or unfreedom. Beyond its function as a *Zollverein*, it is a mechanism for bribing peasants and Foreign Offices. Its adherents can offer refulous returns for tangible losses.

EDWARD PEARCE

London

Copyright

I AM compiling a Directory of Literary Estates in the United Kingdom and Ireland, and I would be pleased to hear from any of your readers who either own the copyright in the work of deceased authors or administer literary estates.

DAVID FLETCHER

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ENCOUNTER acknowledges financial assistance from, among other generous donors, the Arts Council of Great Britain.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY WATMOUGHS LIMITED,
IDLE, BRADFORD; AND LONDON

AUTHORS

William Trevor's new book of short stories, *Beyond the Pale* (which includes "The Blue Dress"), will be published by The Bodley Head early in October.

Michael Charlton is one of Britain's leading broadcasters and a veteran foreign correspondent for the BBC. He and his Radio 3 producer, Anthony Moncrieff, are the co-authors of *Many Reasons Why*, a documentary inquiry into the Viet Nam War (Scolar Press, 1978). His investigative documentary in this issue is based on the texts broadcast earlier this year in the Charlton/Moncrieff series entitled *The Price of Victory*. The BBC hopes to publish the complete series in book form in 1982.

Raymond Aron, the French political philosopher, is a Member of the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques, and Professor of the Collège de France. Among his recent articles in *ENCOUNTER* are "Debate on 'the French Ideology'" (June 1981) and "Is There a Nazi Mystery?" (June 1980).

François Bondy is an editor of the monthly *Schweizer Monatshefte* and of *Die Weltwoche* (Zurich).

Z. A. B. Zeman is Professor of Central and South-eastern European Studies at the University of Lancaster. His books include *Nazi Propaganda* (n.e. Oxford University Press, 1973), and he is co-editor of *East-West Trade: International Year Book* (Pergamon, 1975).

John Archer was educated in Ulster, at "Oxbridge", and in the USA. He now lives in Northern Ireland.

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph* in London.

Alan Brownjohn's latest book of poems, *A Night in the Gazebo*, was published last year by Secker & Warburg.

George MacBeth's most recent publication is *Poems of Love and Death* (Secker, 1980).

Laurence Lerner, Professor of English at the University of Sussex, is the author of *Love and Marriage: Literature in its Social Context* (Edward Arnold, 1979), *The Victorians* (Methuen, 1978), and *Introduction to English Poetry* (Arnold, 1975).

Max Beloff was until his recent retirement Principal of the University College at Buckingham. He received a Life Peerage in the 1981 Birthday Honours List.

Hugh Ragsdale teaches in the Department of History, University of Alabama. He has carried out research during several visits to the Soviet Union, most recently as a Fulbright Fellow from January to May 1981. His books include *Paul I: A Reassessment of his Life and Reign* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979) and *Bonaparte and the Russians: Détente in the Napoleonic Era* (University of Kansas Press, 1980); he has now completed a further study of Paul I.

Life & Letters Today

Manila

PLANE LOGIC: In the glittering 1960's, Braniff set itself apart from the competition with what the airline billed as "The End of the Plain Plane." It painted its big jets in a variety of colors, a sales gimmick so successful that some travelers claimed they could tell the difference in ride between the lime-green 727 and the canary yellow.

Well, Philippine Airlines has found that flashy paint jobs, add 329 pounds to the weight of a twin-engine BAC-111. By stripping the fleet back to plain aluminum, the line has cut \$120,000 from its annual bill for fuel and maintenance.

NEW YORK TIMES

New York City

ART & MURDER: Mark Chapman, the sick killer of John Lennon, told New York detectives last night how he shot the former Beatle.

Within minutes two police cars had arrived. The officer turned him round and handcuffed him. Chapman said: "Would you mind picking up my book?" A copy of J. D. Salinger's "Catcher In The Rye" lay on the floor.

Chapman, according to friends, was an "art freak". His prized possession was a £50 print of Salvador Dali's "Lincoln in Dalivision"—a picture that conjures up the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

DAILY MAIL

London

LAST NIGHT after Judge Dennis Edwards accepted 26-year-old Chapman's changed plea of guilty to the second degree murder of Lennon, more facts came to light.

Chapman modelled himself on Holden Caulfield, the hero in J. D. Salinger's classic book "Catcher In The Rye", said the District Attorney. He bought a copy on the morning of the murder and was still clutching it when arrested.

On the title page he had written "This is my statement" and on the flyleaf he wrote: "To Holden Caulfield. From Holden Caulfield."

NEW STANDARD

London

BIT BY BIT: Sir, I am fairly sure that Frank Sinatra's words were "a two-bit hooker" not "half-bit" (as quoted by Times letter writers, April 15, 22, 25). Two bits is well-known American slang for a quarter of a dollar and as a prostitute's standard price when Frank Sinatra was young was two dollars, to call one a "two-bit hooker" was the greatest of insults [Peter Elstob writes].

Half a bit in the eighteenth century was a Spanish coin worth about threepence. The expression has not been in common use in the United States for over a hundred years.

THE TIMES

London

AMERICANISMS: The fate of 19 illuminated manuscripts dating from the 12th to the 16th century which Brown University, of Providence, Rhode Island, have decided to sell through Sotheby's is part of a programme of "selective deaccessions" in order to raise money for their library.

For anyone who collects hideous Americanisms, here is a new one. If you bought or received an addition to your collection and later decided to get rid of it, the item would become a "deaccession."

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Washington, D.C.

TRANSLATION: The official language of Washington is "Acronym". Washingtonians combine the first letter of each word of an agency or department. Example: "OSHA needs S.P. 134 report before OMB can authorize EIS [Environmental Impact Study] for DOF [disbursement of funds]."

Fortunately, there are many people in Washington who also speak English and will translate for you. Most of them are lawyers. So, if you have a problem making yourself understood, step into any building in Washington and ask a lawyer to translate for you. He will be happy to oblige for \$200 an hour.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London

SIMPLICITY: It is 33 years since Sir Ernest Gowers wrote *Plain Words* to guide civil servants in writing clear, concise English. Sadly, officials who are writing now do not seem to have read the book.

They excuse the fact that much of what they write cannot be understood with the plea that complicated schemes must have complicated explanations. They also claim readers would think it an insult to their intelligences to be addressed in simple English.

They think long words and fine phrases make what they have to say seem more important. They do not care very much if customers and clients remain ignorant. Public ignorance makes their job easier.

THE TIMES

Washington, D.C.

TIME IMMEMORIAM: In a memorandum to "ALL SENATORS", Sen. Howard Baker (who occasionally speaks for the administration) wrote:

"In the future, the entrance to the Republican Leader's Office will be in S-433 (the former Disbursing Office) instead of S-230 where it had been since time in memoriam."

A Senate source passed this gem along with "in memoriam" underlined, and the notation "Senator Baker obviously enjoys 'killing time'." "All senators" now await an invitation from the senator to visit the Lincoln Immemorial.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE



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William Rainey Harper, first president of the University of Chicago, was an ardent biblical scholar. His **ELEMENTS OF HEBREW BY AN INDUCTIVE METHOD** and **INTRODUCTORY HEBREW: METHOD AND MANUAL** are still in print. For those interested in the living language, we have **A TEXTBOOK OF ISRAELI HEBREW** by **Haiim B. Rosén**.

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